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POETICAL WORKS

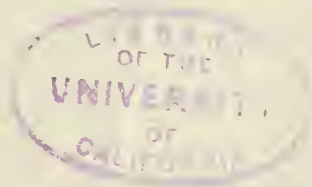
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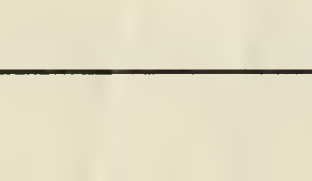
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M. H. W.

## DEDICATION.

### TO MY FATHER.

WHEN your eyes fall upon this page of dedication, and you start to see to whom it is inscribed, your first thought will be of the time, far off, when I was a child, and wrote verses, and when I dedicated them to you, who were my public and my critic. Of all that such a recollection implies of saddest and sweetest to both of us, it would become neither of us to speak before the world; nor would it be possible for us to speak of it to one another with voices that did not falter. Enough, that what is in my heart when I write thus will be fully known to yours.

And my desire is, that you, who are a witness how, if this art of poetry had been a less earnest object to me, it must have fallen from exhausted hands before this day, — that you, who have shared with me in things bitter and sweet, softening or enhancing them, every day, — that you, who hold with me, over all sense of loss and transiency, one hope by one name, — may accept from me the inscription of these volumes, the exponents of a few years of an existence which has been sustained and comforted by you, as well as given. Somewhat more faint-hearted than I used to be, it is my fancy thus to seem to return to a visible personal dependence on you, as if indeed I were a child again; to conjure your beloved image between myself and the public, so as to be sure of one smile; and to satisfy my heart, while I sanctify my ambition, by associating with the great pursuit of my life its tenderest and holiest affection.

Your

E. B. B.

LONDON, 50 WIMPOLE STREET, 1844.

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

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THIS edition, including my earlier and later writings, I have endeavored to render as little unworthy as possible of the indulgence of the public. Several poems I would willingly have withdrawn, if it were not almost impossible to extricate what has been once caught and involved in the machinery of the press. The alternative is a request to the generous reader that he may use the weakness of those earlier verses, which no subsequent revision has succeeded in strengthening, less as a reproach to the writer than as a means of marking some progress in her other attempts.

E. B. B.

LONDON, 1856.

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# AURORA LEIGH.

A POEM IN NINE BOOKS.

*DEDICATION TO JOHN KENYON, Esq.*

THE words "cousin" and "friend" are constantly recurring in this poem, the last pages of which have been finished under the hospitality of your roof, my own dearest cousin and friend,—cousin and friend in a sense of less equality and greater disinterestedness than "Romney's."

Ending, therefore, and preparing once more to quit England, I venture to leave in your hands this book, the most mature of my works, and the one into which my highest convictions upon life and art have entered; that as, through my various efforts in literature, and steps in life, you have believed in me, borne with me, and been generous to me, far beyond the common uses of mere relationship or sympathy of mind, so you may kindly accept in sight of the public this poor sign of esteem, gratitude, and affection from

Your unforgetting  
E. B. B.

39 DEVONSHIRE PLACE,  
Oct. 17, 1856.

# AURORA LEIGH.

## FIRST BOOK.

Of writing many books there is no  
end;  
And I, who have written much in  
prose and verse  
For others' uses, will write now for  
mine,—  
Will write my story for my better  
self,  
As when you paint your portrait for a  
friend,  
Who keeps it in a drawer, and looks  
at it

Long after he has ceased to love you,  
just  
To hold together what he was and is.  
I, writing thus, am still what men call  
young:  
I have not so far left the coasts of life  
To travel inland, that I cannot hear  
That murmur of the outer Infinite  
Which unweaned babies smile at in  
their sleep  
When wondered at for smiling; not  
so far,  
But still I catch my mother at her  
post

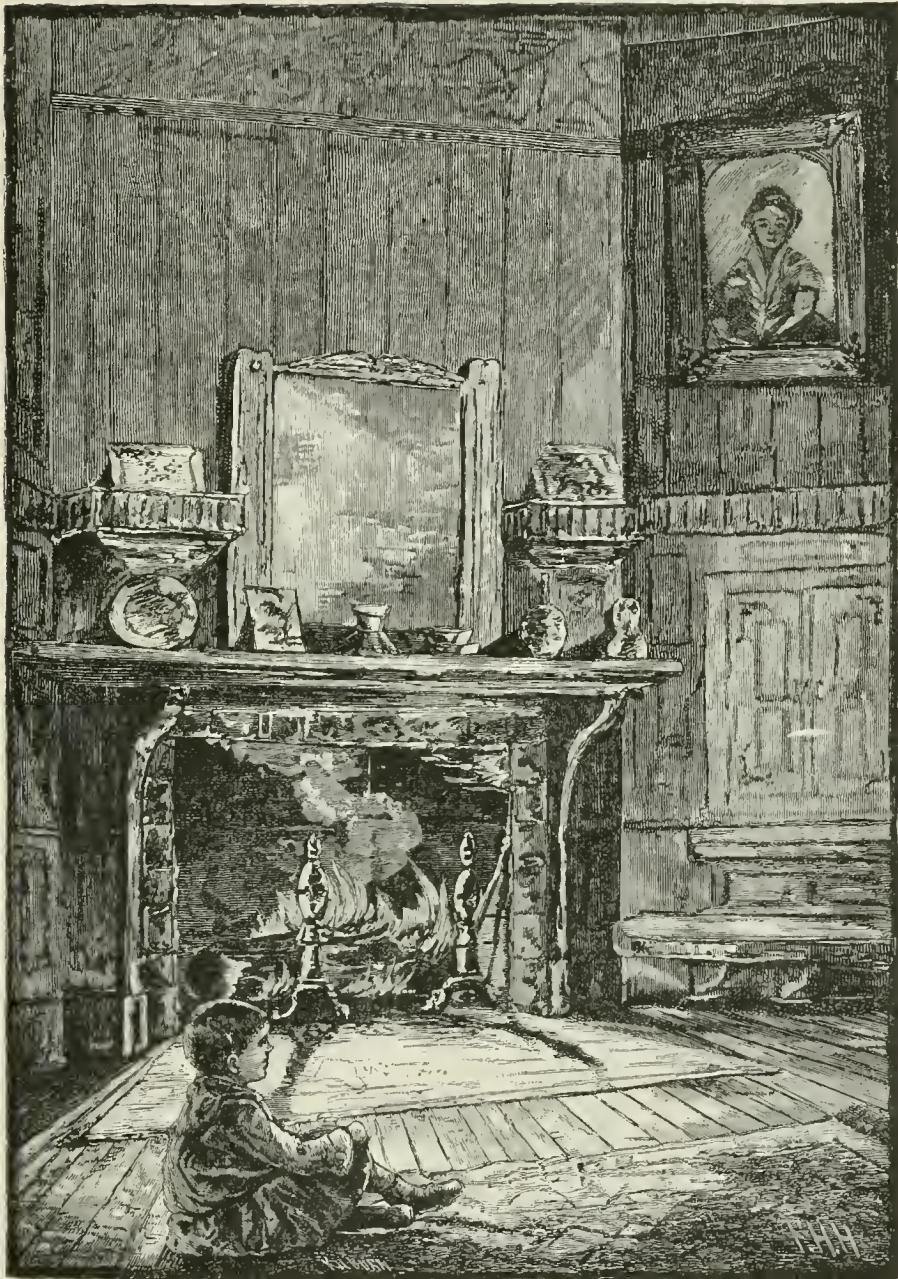
Beside the nursery-door, with finger  
up,  
"Hush, hush, here's too much noise!"  
while her sweet eyes  
Leap forward, taking part against her  
word  
In the child's riot. Still I sit, and feel  
My father's slow hand, when she had  
left us both,  
Stroke out my childish curls across  
his knee,  
And hear Assunta's daily jest (she  
knew  
He liked it better than a better jest)  
Inquire how many golden scudi went  
To make such ringlets. O my father's  
hand,  
Stroke heavily, heavily, the poor hair  
down,  
Draw, press the child's head closer to  
thy knee!  
I'm still too young, too young, to sit  
alone.

I write. My mother was a Florentine,  
Whose rare blue eyes were shut from  
seeing me  
When scarcely I was four years old;  
my life  
A poor spark snatched up from a fail-  
ing lamp  
Which went out therefore. She was  
weak and frail;  
She could not bear the joy of giving  
life;  
The mother's rapture slew her. If her  
kiss  
Had left a longer weight upon my lips,  
It might have steadied the uneasy  
breath,  
And reconciled and fraternized my  
soul  
With the new order. As it was, in-  
deed,  
I felt a mother-want about the world,  
And still went seeking, like a bleating  
lamb  
Left out at night in shutting up the  
fold. —  
As restless as a nest-deserted bird  
Grown chill through something being  
away, though what  
It knows not. I, Aurora Leigh, was  
born  
To make my father sadder, and my-  
self  
Not overjoyous, truly. Women know  
The way to rear up children (to be  
just);

They know a simple, merry, tender  
knack  
Of tying sashes, fitting baby-shoes,  
And stringing pretty words that make  
no sense,  
And kissing full sense into empty  
words;  
Which things are corals to cut life  
upon,  
Although such trifles: children learn  
by such,  
Love's holy earnest in a pretty play,  
And get not over-early solemnized,  
But seeing, as in a rose-bush, Love's  
Divine,  
Which burns and hurts not, — not a  
single bloom, —  
Become aware and unafraid of love.  
Such good do mothers. Fathers love  
as well, —  
Mine did, I know, — but still with  
heavier brains,  
And wills more consciously responsi-  
ble,  
And not as wisely, since less foolishly:  
So mothers have God's license to be  
missed.

My father was an austere Englishman,  
Who, after a dry lifetime spent at  
home  
In college-learning, law, and parish  
talk,  
Was flooded with a passion unaware,  
His whole provisioned and compla-  
cent past  
Drowned out from him that moment.  
As he stood  
In Florence, where he had come to  
spend a month,  
And note the secret of Da Vinci's  
drains,  
He musing somewhat absently per-  
haps  
Some English question . . . whether  
men should pay  
The unpopular but necessary tax  
With left or right hand — in the alien  
sun  
In that great square of the Santissima  
There drifted past him (scarcely  
marked enough  
To move his comfortable island scorn)  
A train of priestly banners, cross and  
psalm,  
The white-veiled, rose-crowned maid-  
ens holding up  
Tall tapers, weighty for such wrists,  
aslant





“I, a little child, would crouch  
For hours upon the floor, with knees drawn up,  
And gaze across them, half in terror, half  
In adoration at the picture.” — Page 3.



To the blue luminous tremor of the  
air,  
And letting drop the white wax as  
they went  
To eat the bishop's wafer at the  
church;  
From which long trail of chanting  
priests and girls  
A face flashed like a cymbal on his  
face,  
And shook with silent clangor brain  
and heart,  
Transfiguring him to music. Thus,  
even thus,  
He, too, received his sacramental gift  
With eucharistic meanings; for he  
loved.

And thus beloved, she died. I've  
heard it said  
That but to see him, in the first sur-  
prise  
Of widower and father, nursing me,  
Unmothered little child of four years  
old, —  
His large man's hands afraid to touch  
my curls,  
As if the gold would tarnish, his  
grave lips  
Contriving such a miserable smile  
As if he knew needs must, or I  
should die,  
And yet 'twas hard, — would almost  
make the stones  
Cry out for pity. There's a verse he  
set  
In Santa Croce to her memory, —  
"Weep for an infant too young to  
weep much  
When death removed this mother," —  
stops the mirth  
To-day on women's faces when they  
walk,  
With rosy children hanging on their  
gowns,  
Under the cloister to escape the sun  
That scorches in the piazza. After  
which  
He left our Florence, and made haste  
to hide  
Himself, his prattling child, and silent  
grief,  
Among the mountains above Pelago;  
Because unmothered babes, he  
thought, had need  
Of mother-nature more than others  
use,  
And Pan's white goats, with udders  
warm, and full

Of mystic contemplations, come to  
feed  
Poor milkless lips of orphans like his  
own.  
Such scholar-scrap he talked, I've  
heard from friends;  
For even prosaic men who wear grief  
long  
Will get to wear it as a hat aside  
With a flower stuck in't. Father,  
then, and child,  
We lived among the mountains many  
years,  
God's silence on the outside of the  
house,  
And we who did not speak too loud  
within,  
And old Assunta to make up the fire,  
Crossing herself whenever a sudden  
flame  
Which lightened from the firewood  
made alive  
That picture of my mother on the  
wall.  
The painter drew it after she was  
dead;  
And when the face was finished,  
throat and hands,  
Her cameriera carried him, in hate  
Of the English-fashioned shroud, the  
last brocade  
She dressed in at the Pitti. "He  
should paint  
No sadder thing than that," she  
swore, "to wrong  
Her poor signora." Therefore very  
strange  
The effect was. I, a little child,  
would crouch  
For hours upon the floor, with knees  
drawn up,  
And gaze across them, half in terror,  
half  
In adoration, at the picture there, —  
That swan-like supernatural white  
life  
Just sailing upward from the red stiff  
silk  
Which seemed to have no part in it,  
nor power  
To keep it from quite breaking out  
of bounds.  
For hours I sate and stared. Assun-  
ta's awe  
And my poor father's melancholy  
eyes  
Still pointed that way. That way  
went my thoughts

When wandering beyond sight. And  
 as I grew  
 In years, I mixed, confused, uncon-  
 sciously.  
 Whatever I last read, or heard, or  
 dreamed, —  
 Abhorrent, admirable, beautiful,  
 Pathetical, or ghastly, or grotesque, —  
 With still that face . . . which did  
 not therefore change,  
 But kept the mystic level of all  
 forms,  
 Hates, fears, and admirations — was  
 by turns  
 Ghost, fiend, and angel, fairy, witch,  
 and sprite;  
 A dauntless Muse who eyes a dread-  
 ful Fate;  
 A loving Psyche who loses sight of  
 Love;  
 A still Medusa with mild milky  
 brows,  
 All curdled and all clothed upon with  
 snakes  
 Whose slime falls fast as sweat will:  
 or anon  
 Our Lady of the Passion, stabbed  
 with swords  
 Where the Babe sucked: or Lania in  
 her first  
 Moonlighted pallor, ere she shrunk  
 and blinked,  
 And shuddering wriggled down to  
 the unclean;  
 Or my own mother, leaving her last  
 smile  
 In her last kiss upon the baby-mouth  
 My father pushed down on the bed  
 for that;  
 Or my dead mother, without smile or  
 kiss,  
 Buried at Florence. All which im-  
 ages,  
 Concentred on the picture, glassed  
 themselves  
 Before my meditative childhood, as  
 The incoherencies of change and  
 death  
 Are represented fully, mixed and  
 merged,  
 In the smooth fair mystery of perpet-  
 ual life.

And while I stared away my childish  
 wits  
 Upon my mother's picture, (ah, poor  
 child!)  
 My father, who through love had  
 suddenly

Thrown off the old conventions,  
 broken loose  
 From chin-bands of the soul, like  
 Lazarus,  
 Yet had no time to learn to talk and  
 walk,  
 Or grow anew familiar with the  
 sun;  
 Who had reached to freedom, not to  
 action, lived,  
 But lived as one entranced, with  
 thoughts, not aims;  
 Whom love had unmade from a com-  
 mon man,  
 But not completed to an uncommon  
 man, —  
 My father taught me what he had  
 learnt the best  
 Before he died, and left me, — grief  
 and love.  
 And seeing we had books among the  
 hills,  
 Strong words of counselling souls  
 confederate  
 With vocal pines and waters, out of  
 books  
 He taught me all the ignorance of  
 men,  
 And how God laughs in heaven when  
 any man  
 Says, "Here I'm learned; this I un-  
 derstand;  
 In that I am never caught at fault or  
 doubt."  
 He sent the schools to school, demon-  
 strating  
 A fool will pass for such through one  
 mistake,  
 While a philosopher will pass for  
 such  
 Through said mistakes being ven-  
 tured in the gross,  
 And heaped up to a system.

I am like,  
 They tell me, my dear father. Broad-  
 er brows  
 Howbeit, upon a slenderer under-  
 growth  
 Of delicate features, — paler, near as  
 grave;  
 But then my mother's smile breaks  
 up the whole,  
 And makes it better sometimes than  
 itself.

So nine full years our days were hid  
 with God  
 Among his mountains. I was just  
 thirteen,

Still growing like the plants from un-  
seen roots  
In tongue-tied springs, and suddenly  
awoke  
To full life and life's needs and ago-  
nies,  
With an intense, strong, struggling  
heart, beside  
A stone-dead father. Life, struck  
sharp on death,  
Makes awful lightning. His last  
word was, "Love—  
Love, my child, love, love!"—(then  
he had done with grief)  
"Love, my child." Ere I answered,  
he was gone,  
And none was left to love in all the  
world.

There ended childhood. What suc-  
ceeded next  
I recollect, as, after fevers, men  
Thread back the passage of delirium,  
Missing the turn still, baffled by the  
door:  
Smooth, endless days, notched here  
and there with knives,  
A weary, wormy darkness, spurred  
i' the flank  
With flame, that it should eat and end  
itself  
Like some tormented scorpion. Then  
at last  
I do remember clearly how there  
came  
A stranger with authority, not right  
(I thought not), who commanded,  
caught me up  
From old Assunta's neck; how with  
a shriek  
She let me go, while I, with ears too  
full  
Of my father's silence to shriek back  
— a word,  
In all a child's astonishment at  
grief,  
Stared at the wharf-edge where she  
stood and moaned.  
My poor Assunta, where she stood  
and moaned!  
The white walls, the blue hills, my  
Italy,  
Drawn backward from the shudder-  
ing steamer-deck,  
Like one in anger drawing back her  
skirts  
Which suppliants catch at. Then the  
bitter sea  
Inexorably pushed between us both,

And, sweeping up the ship with my  
despair,  
Threw us out as a pasture to the  
stars.

Ten nights and days we voyaged on  
the deep;  
Ten nights and days without the com-  
mon face  
Of any day or night; the moon and  
sun  
Cut off from the green reconciling  
earth,  
To starve into a blind ferocity,  
And glare unnatural; the very sky  
(Dropping its bell-net down upon the  
sea  
As if no human heart should 'scape  
alive),  
Bedraggled with the desolating salt,  
Until it seemed no more that holy  
heaven  
To which my father went. All new  
and strange;  
The universe turned stranger, for a  
child.

Then land!—then England! oh, the  
frosty cliffs  
Looked cold upon me. Could I find  
a home  
Among those mean red houses through  
the fog?  
And when I heard my father's lan-  
guage first  
From alien lips which had no kiss for  
mine,  
I wept aloud, then laughed, then  
wept, then wept;  
And some one near me said the child  
was mad  
Through much sea-sickness. The  
train swept us on.  
Was this my father's England? the  
great isle?  
The ground seemed cut up from the  
fellowship  
Of verdure, field from field, as man  
from man:  
The skies themselves looked low and  
positive,  
As almost you could touch them with  
a hand,  
And dared to do it, they were so far  
off  
From God's celestial crystals; all  
things blurred  
And dull and vague. Did Shakspeare  
and his mates

Absorb the light here? Not a hill or  
stone  
With heart to strike a radiant color  
up,  
Or active outline on the indifferent  
air.

I think I see my father's sister stand  
Upon the hall-step of her country-  
house  
To give me welcome. She stood  
straight and calm,  
Her somewhat narrow forehead braid-  
ed tight  
As if for taming accidental thoughts  
From possible pulses; brown hair  
pricked with gray  
By frigid use of life (she was not old,  
Although my father's elder by a  
year);  
A nose drawn sharply, yet in delicate  
lines;  
A close mild mouth, a little soured  
about  
The ends, through speaking unrequit-  
ed loves  
Or, peradventure, niggardly half-  
truths;  
Eyes of no color — once they might  
have smiled,  
But never, never, have forgot them-  
selves  
In smiling; cheeks in which was yet  
a rose  
Of perished summers, like a rose in a  
book,  
Kept more for ruth than pleasure —  
if past bloom,  
Past fading also.

She had lived, we'll say,  
A harmless life, she called a virtuous  
life,  
A quiet life, which was not life at all  
(But that, she had not lived enough  
to know),  
Between the vicar and the county  
squires,  
The lord-lieutenant looking down  
sometimes  
From the empyrean to assure their  
souls  
Against chance vulgarisms, and, in  
the abyss,  
The apothecary looked on once a year  
To prove their soundness of humility.  
The poor-club exercised her Christian  
gifts  
Of knitting stockings, stitching petti-  
coats,

Because we are of one flesh, after all,  
And need one flannel (with a proper  
sense  
Of difference in the quality); and  
still  
The book-club, guarded from your  
modern trick  
Of shaking dangerous questions from  
the crease,  
Preserved her intellectual. She had  
lived  
A sort of cage-bird life, born in a  
cage,  
Accounting that to leap from perch to  
perch  
Was act and joy enough for any bird.  
Dear Heaven, how silly are the things  
that live  
In thickets, and eat berries!

I, alas!  
A wild bird scarcely fledged, was  
brought to her cage,  
And she was there to meet me. Very  
kind.  
Bring the clean water, give out the  
fresh seed.

She stood upon the steps to welcome  
me,  
Calm, in black garb. I clung about  
her neck:  
Young babes, who catch at every  
shred of wool  
To draw the new light closer, catch  
and cling  
Less blindly. In my ears my father's  
word  
Hummed ignorantly, as the sea in  
shells, —  
"Love, love, my child." She, black  
there with my grief,  
Might feel my love: she was his sis-  
ter once.  
I clung to her. A moment she seemed  
moved,  
Kissed me with cold lips, suffered me  
to cling,  
And drew me feebly through the hall  
into  
The room she sate in. There, with  
some strange spasm  
Of pain and passion, she wrung loose  
my hands  
Imperiously, and held me at arm's-  
length,  
And with two gray-steel naked-bladed  
eyes  
Searched through my face, — ay,  
stabbed it through and through.

Through brows and cheeks and chin,  
 as if to find  
 A wicked murderer in my innocent  
 face,  
 If not here, there perhaps. Then,  
 drawing breath,  
 She struggled for her ordinary calm,  
 And missed it rather; told me not to  
 shrink,  
 As if she had told me not to lie or  
 swear,  
 "She loved my father, and would love  
 me too  
 As long as I deserved it." Very  
 kind.

I understood her meaning afterward:  
 She thought to find my mother in my  
 face,  
 And questioned it for that. For she,  
 my aunt,  
 Had loved my father truly, as she  
 could,  
 And hated with the gall of gentle  
 souls  
 My Tuscan mother, who had fooled  
 away  
 A wise man from wise courses, a good  
 man  
 From obvious duties, and depriving  
 her,  
 His sister, of the household prece-  
 dence,  
 Had wronged his tenants, robbed his  
 native land,  
 And made him mad, alike by life and  
 death,  
 In love and sorrow. She had pored  
 for years  
 What sort of woman could be suitable  
 To her sort of hate, to entertain it  
 with,  
 And so her very curiosity  
 Became hate too, and all the idealism  
 She ever used in life was used for  
 hate,  
 Till hate, so nourished, did exceed at  
 last  
 The love from which it grew in  
 strength and heat,  
 And wrinkled her smooth conscience  
 with a sense  
 Of disputable virtue (say not sin)  
 When Christian doctrine was enforced  
 at church.

And thus my father's sister was to me  
 My mother's hater. From that day  
 she did

Her duty to me (I appreciate it  
 In her own word as spoken to herself),  
 Her duty in large measure, well  
 pressed out,  
 But measured always. She was gen-  
 erous, bland,  
 More courteous than was tender, gave  
 me still  
 The first place, as if fearful that  
 God's saints  
 Would look down suddenly and say,  
 "Herein  
 You missed a point, I think, through  
 lack of love."  
 Alas! a mother never is afraid  
 Of speaking angrily to any child,  
 Since love, she knows, is justified of  
 love.

And I—I was a good child, on the  
 whole,  
 A meek and manageable child. Why  
 not?  
 I did not live to have the faults of  
 life.  
 There seemed more true life in my  
 father's grave  
 Than in all England. Since *that*  
 threw me off  
 Who fain would cleave (his latest  
 will, they say,  
 Consigned me to his land), I only  
 thought  
 Of lying quiet there, where I was  
 thrown  
 Like seaweed on the rocks, and suf-  
 fering her  
 To prick me to a pattern with her pin,  
 Fibre from fibre, delicate leaf from  
 leaf,  
 And dry out from my drowned anat-  
 omy  
 The last sea-salt left in me.

So it was.  
 I broke the copious curls upon my  
 head  
 In braids, because she liked smooth-  
 ordered hair.  
 I left off saying my sweet Tuscan  
 words  
 Which still at any stirring of the  
 heart  
 Came up to float across the English  
 phrase  
 As lilies (*Bene* or *Che che*), because  
 She liked my father's child to speak  
 his tongue.  
 I learnt the collects and the cate-  
 chism,

The creeds, from Athanasius back to  
 Nice,  
 The Articles, the Tracts *against* the  
 times  
 (By no means Buonaventure's "Prick  
 of Love"),  
 And various popular synopses of  
 Inhuman doctrines never taught by  
 John,  
 Because she liked instructed piety.  
 I learnt my complement of classic  
 French  
 (Kept pure of Balzac and neologism)  
 And German also, since she liked a  
 range  
 Of liberal education, — tongues, not  
 books.  
 I learnt a little algebra, a little  
 Of the mathematics, brushed with  
 extreme flounee  
 The circle of the sciences, because  
 She disliked women who are frivo-  
 lous.  
 I learnt the royal genealogies  
 Of Oviedo, the internal laws  
 Of the Burmese Empire, by how many  
 feet  
 Mount Chimborazo outsoars Tene-  
 riffe,  
 What navigable river joins itself  
 To Lara, and what census of the year  
 five  
 Was taken at Klagenfurt, because she  
 liked  
 A general insight into useful facts.  
 I learnt much music, such as would  
 have been  
 As quite impossible in Johnson's day  
 As still it might be wished, fine  
 sleights of hand  
 And unimagined fingering, shuffling  
 off  
 The hearer's soul through hurricanes  
 of notes  
 To a noisy Tophet; and I drew . . .  
 costumes  
 From French engravings, nereids  
 neatly draped  
 (With smirks of simmering godship).  
 I washed in  
 Landscapes from nature (rather say,  
 washed out).  
 I danced the polka and Cellarius,  
 Spun glass, stuffed birds, and mod-  
 elled flowers in wax,  
 Because she liked accomplishments  
 in girls.  
 I read a score of books on woman-  
 hood,

To prove, if women do not think at  
 all,  
 They may teach thinking (to a  
 maiden-aunt,  
 Or else the author), — books that  
 boldly assert  
 Their right of comprehending hus-  
 band's talk  
 When not too deep, and even of an-  
 swering  
 With pretty "may it please you," or  
 "so it is;"  
 Their rapid insight and fine aptitude,  
 Particular worth and general mission-  
 ariness,  
 As long as they keep quiet by the fire,  
 And never say "no" when the world  
 says "ay,"  
 For that is fatal; their angelic reach  
 Of virtue, chiefly used to sit and darn,  
 And fatten household sinners; their,  
 in brief,  
 Potential faculty in every thing  
 Of abdicating power in it: she owned  
 She liked a woman to be womanly,  
 And English women, she thanked  
 God, and sighed  
 (Some people always sigh in thanking  
 God),  
 Were models to the universe. And  
 last  
 I learnt cross-stitch, because she did  
 not like  
 To see me wear the night with empty  
 hands,  
 A-doing nothing. So my shepherdess  
 Was something, after all (the pastoral  
 saints  
 Be praised for't), leaning lovelorn,  
 with pink eyes  
 To match her shoes, when I mistook  
 the silks,  
 Her head uncrushed by that round  
 weight of hat  
 So strangely similar to the tortoise-  
 shell  
 Which slew the tragic poet.  
 By the way,  
 The works of women are symbolical.  
 We sew, sew, prick our fingers, dull  
 our sight.  
 Producing what? A pair of slippers,  
 sir,  
 To put on when you're weary, or a  
 stool  
 To stumble over, and vex you . . .  
 "Curse that stool!"  
 Or else, at best, a cushion, where you  
 lean



And sleep, and dream of something  
 we are not,  
 But would be for your sake. Alas,  
 alas!  
 This hurts most, this, — that after all  
 we are paid  
 The worth of our work, perhaps.  
 In looking down  
 Those years of education (to return)  
 I wonder if Brinvilliers suffered more  
 In the water-torture . . . flood suc-  
 ceeding flood  
 To drench the incapable throat, and  
 split the veins . . .  
 Than I did. Certain of your feebler  
 souls  
 Go out in such a process; many pine  
 To a sick, inodorous light; my own  
 endured:  
 I had relations in the Unseen, and  
 drew  
 The elemental nutriment and heat  
 From nature, as earth feels the sun  
 at nights,  
 Or as a babe sucks surely in the dark  
 I kept the life thrust on me, on the  
 outside  
 Of the inner life, with all its ample  
 room  
 For heart and lungs, for will and in-  
 tellect,  
 Inviolable by conventions. God,  
 I thank thee for that grace of thine!  
 At first  
 I felt no life which was not patience;  
 did  
 The thing she bade me, without heed  
 to a thing  
 Beyond it; sate in just the chair she  
 placed,  
 With back against the window, to ex-  
 clude  
 The sight of the great lime-tree on  
 the lawn,  
 Which seemed to have come on pur-  
 pose from the woods  
 To bring the house a message, — ay,  
 and walked  
 Demurely in her carpeted low rooms,  
 As if I should not, harkening my own  
 steps,  
 Misdoubt I was alive. I read her  
 books;  
 Was civil to her cousin, Romney  
 Leigh:  
 Gave ear to her vicar, tea to her visit-  
 ors,  
 And heard them whisper, when I  
 changed a cup

(I blushed for joy at that), — “The  
 Italian child,  
 For all her blue eyes and her quiet  
 ways,  
 Thrives ill in England. She is paler  
 yet  
 Than when we came the last time:  
 she will die.”

“Will die.” My cousin Romney Leigh  
 blushed too,  
 With sudden anger, and approaching  
 me,  
 Said low between his teeth, “You’re  
 wicked now!  
 You wish to die and leave the world  
 a-dusk  
 For others, with your naughty light  
 blown out?”  
 I looked into his face defyingly.  
 He might have known, that, being  
 what I was,  
 ’Twas natural to like to get away  
 As far as dead folk can; and then, in-  
 deed,  
 Some people make no trouble when  
 they die.  
 He turned and went abruptly,  
 slammed the door,  
 And shut his dog out.  
 Romney, Romney Leigh.  
 I have not named my cousin hitherto,  
 And yet I used him as a sort of  
 friend;  
 My elder by few years, but cold and  
 shy  
 And absent . . . tender, when he  
 thought of it,  
 Which scarcely was imperative, grave  
 betimes,  
 As well as early master of Leigh Hall,  
 Whereof the nightmare sate upon his  
 youth  
 Repressing all its seasonable delights,  
 And agonizing with a ghastly sense  
 Of universal hideous want and wrong  
 To incriminate possession. When he  
 came  
 From college to the country, very oft  
 He crossed the hill on visits to my  
 aunt,  
 With gifts of blue grapes from the  
 hothouses,  
 A book in one hand, — mere statistics  
 (if  
 I chanced to lift the cover), count of  
 all  
 The goats whose beards grow sprout-  
 ing down toward hell

Against God's separative judgment-hour.

And she, — she almost loved him; even allowed

That sometimes he should seem to sigh my way:

It made him easier to be pitiful.

And sighing was his gift. So, undisturbed

At whiles, she let him shut my music up,

And push my needles down, and lead me out

To see in that south angle of the house

The figs grow black as if by a Tuscan rock,

On some light pretext. She would turn her head

At other moments, go to fetch a thing, And leave me breath enough to speak

with him, For his sake: it was simple.

He would have saved me utterly, it seemed, Sometimes too

He stood and looked so. Once he stood so near

He dropped a sudden hand upon my head

Bent down on woman's work, as soft as rain;

But then I rose, and shook it off as fire, —

The stranger's touch that took my father's place,

Yet dared seem soft.

I used him for a friend Before I ever knew him for a friend.

'Twas better, 'twas worse also, afterward:

We came so close, we saw our differences

Too intimately. Always Romney Leigh

Was looking for the worms, I for the gods.

A godlike nature his: the gods look down,

Incurious of themselves; and certainly

'Tis well I should remember, how, those days,

I was a worm too, and he looked on me.

A little by his act perhaps, yet more By something in me, surely not my will,

I did not die; but slowly, as one in swoon,

To whom life creeps back in the form of death,

With a sense of separation, a blind pain

Of blank obstruction, and a roar i' the ears

Of visionary chariots which retreat As earth grows clearer . . . slowly,

by degrees, I woke, rose up . . . where was I? in

the world; For uses therefore I must count worth

while.

I had a little chamber in the house, As green as any privet-hedge a bird

Might choose to build in, though the nest itself

Could show but dead-brown sticks and straws. The walls

Were green; the carpet was pure green; the straight

Small bed was curtained greenly; and the folds

Hung green about the window, which let in

The outdoor world with all its greenery.

You could not push your head out, and escape

A dash of dawn-dew from the honeysuckle,

But so you were baptized into the grace

And privilege of seeing. . . . First the lime

(I had enough there, of the lime, be sure:

My morning-dream was often hummed away

By the bees in it); past the lime the lawn,

Which, after sweeping broadly round the house,

Went trickling through the shrubberies in a stream

Of tender turf, and wore and lost itself

Among the acacias, over which you saw

The irregular line of elms by the deep lane

Which stopped the grounds, and dammed the overflow

Of arbutus and laurel. Out of sight The lane was; sunk so deep, no foreign

tramp.

Nor drover of wild ponies out of  
Wales,  
Could guess if lady's hall or tenant's  
lodge  
Dispensed such odors, though his  
stick, well crooked,  
Might reach the lowest trail of blos-  
soming brier  
Which dipped upon the wall. Be-  
hind the elms,  
And through their tops, you saw the  
folded hills  
Striped up and down with hedges  
(burly oaks  
Projecting from the line to show  
themselves),  
Through which my cousin Romney's  
chimneys smoked,  
As still as when a silent mouth in  
frost  
Breathes, showing where the wood-  
lands hid Leigh Hall;  
While, far above, a jut of table-land,  
A promontory without water,  
stretched.  
You could not catch it if the days were  
thick,  
Or took it for a cloud; but, other-  
wise,  
The vigorous sun would catch it up at  
eve,  
And use it for an anvil till he had  
filled  
The shelves of heaven with burning  
thunderbolts,  
Protesting against night and dark-  
ness; then,  
When all his setting trouble was re-  
solved  
To a trance of passive glory, you  
might see  
In apparition on the golden sky,  
(Alas, my Giotto's background!) the  
sheep run  
Along the fine clear outline, small as  
mice  
That run along a witch's scarlet  
thread.

Not a grand nature; not my chestnut-  
woods  
Of Vallombrosa, cleaving by the  
spurs  
To the precipices; not my headlong  
leaps  
Of waters, that cry out for joy or  
fear  
In leaping through the palpitating  
pines,

Like a white soul tossed out to eter-  
nity  
With thrills of time upon it; not, in-  
deed,  
My multitudinous mountains, sitting  
in  
The magic circle, with the mutual  
touch  
Electric, panting from their full deep  
hearts  
Beneath the influent heavens, and  
waiting for  
Communion and commission. Italy  
Is one thing, England one.  
On English ground  
You understand the letter, — ere the  
fall  
How Adam lived in a garden. All  
the fields  
Are tied up fast with hedges, nose-  
gay-like;  
The hills are crumpled plains, the  
plains parterres;  
The trees round, woolly, ready to be  
clipped;  
And if you seek for any wilderness,  
You find at best a park. A nature  
tamed,  
And grown domestic like a barn-door  
fowl,  
Which does not awe you with its  
claws and beak,  
Nor tempt you to an eyry too high  
up,  
But which in cackling sets you think-  
ing of  
Your eggs to-morrow at breakfast, in  
the pause  
Of finer meditation.  
Rather say,  
A sweet familiar nature, stealing in  
As a dog might, or child, to touch  
your hand,  
Or pluck your gown, and humbly  
mind you so  
Of presence and affection, excellent  
For inner uses, from the things with-  
out.

I could not be unthankful, I who was  
Entreated thus, and holpen. In the  
room  
I speak of, ere the house was well  
awake,  
And also after it was well asleep,  
I sate alone, and drew the blessing  
in  
Of all that nature. With a gradual  
step,

A stir among the leaves, a breath, a ray,  
 It came in softly, while the angels made  
 A place for it beside me. The moon came,  
 And swept my chamber clean of foolish thoughts.  
 The sun came, saying, "Shall I lift this light  
 Against the line-tree, and you will not look?  
 I make the birds sing: listen!—but, for you,  
 God never hears your voice, excepting when  
 You lie upon the bed at nights, and weep."

Then something moved me. Then I wakened up,  
 More slowly than I verily write now:  
 But wholly, at last, I wakened, opened wide  
 The window and my soul, and let the airs  
 And outdoor sights sweep gradual gospels in,  
 Regenerating what I was. O Life!  
 How oft we throw it off, and think, "Enough,  
 Enough of life in so much!—here's a cause  
 For rupture; herein we must break with Life,  
 Or be ourselves unworthy; here we are wronged,  
 Maimed, spoiled for aspiration: farewell, Life!"  
 And so, as froward babes, we hide our eyes  
 And think all ended. Then Life calls to us  
 In some transformed, apocalyptic voice.  
 Above us, or below us, or around:  
 Perhaps we name it Nature's voice, or Love's,  
 Tripping ourselves, because we are more ashamed  
 To own our compensations than our griefs:  
 Still Life's voice; still we make our peace with Life.

And I, so young then, was not sullen.  
 Soon  
 I used to get up early just to sit

And watch the morning quicken in the gray,  
 And hear the silence open like a flower,  
 Leaf after leaf, and stroke with listless hand  
 The woodbine through the window, till at last  
 I came to do it with a sort of love,  
 At foolish unaware: whereat I smiled,  
 A melancholy smile, to catch myself  
 Smiling for joy.

Capacity for joy  
 Admits temptation. It seemed, next, worth while  
 To dodge the sharp sword set against my life,  
 To slip down stairs through all the sleepy house,  
 As mute as any dream there, and escape,  
 As a soul from the body, out of doors,  
 Glide through the shrubberies, drop into the lane,  
 And wander on the hills an hour or two,  
 Then back again, before the house should stir.

Or else I sate on in my chamber green,  
 And lived my life, and thought my thoughts, and prayed  
 My prayers without the vicar; read my books,  
 Without considering whether they were fit  
 To do me good. Mark there. We get no good  
 By being ungenerous, even to a book,  
 And calculating profits,—so much help  
 By so much reading. It is rather when  
 We gloriously forget ourselves, and plunge  
 Soul-forward, headlong, into a book's profound,  
 Impassioned for its beauty and salt of truth,—  
 'Tis then we get the right good from a book.

I read much. What my father taught before  
 From many a volume, love re-emphasized  
 Upon the selfsame pages: Theophrast

Grew tender with the memory of his eyes,  
 And Ælian made mine wet. The trick of Greek  
 And Latin he had taught me, as he would  
 Have taught me wrestling, or the game of fives,  
 If such he had known, — most like a shipwrecked man,  
 Who heaps his single platter with goats' cheese  
 And scarlet berries; or like any man  
 Who loves but one, and so gives all at once.  
 Because he has it, rather than because  
 He counts it worthy. Thus my father gave:  
 And thus, as did the women formerly  
 By young Achilles, when they pinned a veil  
 Across the boy's audacious front, and swept  
 With tuneful laughs the silver-fretted rocks,  
 He wrapt his little daughter in his large  
 Man's doublet, careless did it fit or no.

But after I had read for memory  
 I read for hope. The path my father's foot  
 Had trod me out (which suddenly broke off  
 What time he dropped the wallet of the flesh  
 And passed) alone I carried on, and set  
 My child-heart 'gainst the thorny underwood,  
 To reach the grassy shelter of the trees.  
 Ah babe i' the wood, without a brother-babe!  
 My own self-pity, like the redbreast bird,  
 Flies back to cover all that past with leaves.

Sublimest danger, over which none weeps,  
 When any young wayfaring soul goes forth  
 Alone, unconscious of the perilous road,  
 The day-sun dazzling in his limpid eyes,

To thrust his own way, he an alien, through  
 The world of books! Ah, you! — you think it fine,  
 You clap hands — "A fair day!" — you cheer him on,  
 As if the worst could happen were to rest  
 Too long beside a fountain. Yet behold,  
 Behold! — the world of books is still the world,  
 And worldlings in it are less merciful  
 And more puissant. For the wicked there  
 Are winged like angels; every knife that strikes  
 Is edged from elemental fire to assail  
 A spiritual life; the beautiful seems right  
 By force of beauty, and the feeble wrong  
 Because of weakness; power is justified,  
 Though armed against St. Michael; many a crown  
 Covers bald foreheads. In the book-world, true,  
 There's no lack, neither, of God's saints and kings,  
 That shake the ashes of the grave aside  
 From their calm locks, and, undiscoffited,  
 Look steadfast truths against Time's changing mask.  
 True, many a prophet teaches in the roads;  
 True, many a seer pulls down the flaming heavens  
 Upon his own head in strong martyrdom  
 In order to light men a moment's space.  
 But stay! Who judges? Who distinguishes  
 'Twixt Saul and Nahash justly, at first sight,  
 And leaves King Saul precisely at the sin,  
 To serve King David? Who discerns at once  
 The sound of the trumpets, when the trumpets blow  
 For Alaric as well as Charlemagne?  
 Who judges wizards, and can tell true seers  
 From conjurers? The child, there? Would you leave

That child to wander in a battle-  
field,  
And push his innocent smile against  
the guns?  
Or even in a catacomb, his torch  
Grown ragged in the fluttering air,  
and all  
The dark a-mutter round him? not a  
child.

I read books bad and good, — some  
bad and good  
At once (good aims not always make  
good books:  
Well-tempered spades turn up ill-  
smelling soils  
In digging vineyards even); books  
that prove  
God's being so definitely, that man's  
doubt  
Grows self-defined the other side the  
line,  
Made atheist by suggestion; moral  
books,  
Exasperating to license; genial books,  
Discounting from the human dignity;  
And merry books, which set you  
weeping when  
The sun shines; ay, and melancholy  
books,  
Which make you laugh that any one  
should weep  
In this disjointed life for one wrong  
more.

The world of books is still the world,  
I write;  
And both worlds have God's providence,  
thank God,  
To keep and hearten. With some  
struggle, indeed,  
Among the breakers, some hard swim-  
ming through  
The deeps, I lost breath in my soul  
sometimes,  
And cried, "God save me, if there's  
any God!"  
But, even so, God saved me; and,  
being dashed  
From error on to error, every turn  
Still brought me nearer to the central  
truth.

I thought so. All this anguish in the  
thick  
Of men's opinions . . . press and  
counterpress,  
Now up, now down, now underfoot,  
and now

Emergent . . . all the best of it, per-  
haps,  
But throws you back upon a noble  
trust  
And use of your own instinct, —  
merely proves  
Pure reason stronger than bare infer-  
ence  
At strongest. Try it, — fix against  
heaven's wall  
The scaling-ladders of school logic,  
mount  
Step by step! — sight goes faster; that  
still ray  
Which strikes out from you, how, you  
cannot tell,  
And why, you know not, (did you  
eliminate,  
That such as you indeed should ana-  
lyze?)  
Goes straight and fast as light, and  
high as God.

The cygnet finds the water; but the  
man  
Is born in ignorance of his element,  
And feels out, blind at first, disorgan-  
ized  
By sin i' the blood, his spirit-insight  
dulled  
And crossed by his sensations. Pres-  
ently  
He feels it quicken in the dark some-  
times,  
When, mark, be reverent, be obedi-  
ent,  
For such dumb motions of imperfect  
life  
Are oracles of vital Deity,  
Attesting the Hereafter. Let who  
says  
"The soul's a clean white paper,"  
rather say,  
A palimpsest, a prophet's holograph.  
Defiled, erased, and covered by a  
monk's, —  
The apocalypse, by a Longus! poring  
on  
Which obscene text, we may discern,  
perhaps,  
Some fair, fine trace of what was  
written once,  
Some upstroke of an alpha and omega  
Expressing the old scripture.  
Books, books, books!  
I had found the secret of a garret-  
room,  
Piled high with cases in my father's  
name,

Piled high, packed large, where, creeping in and out  
 Among the giant fossils of my past,  
 Like some small nimble mouse between the ribs  
 Of a mastodon, I nibbled here and there  
 At this or that box, pulling through the gap  
 In heats of terror, haste, victorious joy,  
 The first book first. And how I felt it beat  
 Under my pillow in the morning's dark,  
 An hour before the sun would let me read!  
 My books! At last, because the time was ripe,  
 I chanced upon the poets.

As the earth  
 Plunges in fury, when the internal fires  
 Have reached and pricked her heart, and throwing flat  
 The marts and temples, the triumphal gates  
 And towers of observation, clears herself  
 To elemental freedom — thus, my soul,  
 At poetry's divine first finger-touch,  
 Let go conventions, and sprang up surprised,  
 Convicted of the great eternities  
 Before two worlds.

What's this, Aurora Leigh,  
 You write so of the poets, and not laugh?  
 Those virtuous liars, dreamers after dark,  
 Exaggerators of the sun and moon,  
 And soothsayers in a tea-cup?

I write so  
 Of the only truth-tellers now left to God,  
 The only speakers of essential truth.  
 Opposed to relative, comparative,  
 And temporal truths; the only holders by  
 His sun-skirts, through conventional gray glooms;  
 The only teachers who instruct mankind,  
 From just a shadow on a charnel-wall,  
 To find man's veritable stature out  
 Erect, sublime, — the measure of a man;

And that's the measure of an angel, says  
 The apostle. Ay, and while your common men  
 Lay telegraphs, gauge railroads, reign, reap, dine,  
 And dust the flaunty carpets of the world  
 For kings to walk on, or our president,  
 The poet suddenly will catch them up  
 With his voice like a thunder, —  
 "This is soul,  
 This is life, this word is being said in heaven,  
 Here's God down on us! what are you about?"  
 How all those workers start amid their work,  
 Look round, look up, and feel, a moment's space,  
 That carpet-dusting, though a pretty trade,  
 Is not the imperative labor, after all!

My own best poets, am I one with you,  
 That thus I love you, — or but one through love?  
 Does all this smell of thyme about my feet  
 Conclude my visit to your holy hill  
 In personal presence, or but testify  
 The rustling of your vesture through my dreams  
 With influent odors? When my joy and pain,  
 My thought and aspiration, like the stops  
 Of pipe or flute, are absolutely dumb,  
 Unless melodious, do you play on me,  
 My pipers? — and if, sooth, you did not blow,  
 Would no sound come? or is the music mine,  
 As a man's voice or breath is called his own,  
 Inbreathed by the Life-breather?  
 There's a doubt  
 For cloudy seasons!

But the sun was high  
 When first I felt my pulses set themselves  
 For concord; when the rhythmic turbulence  
 Of blood and brain swept outward upon words,  
 As wind upon the alders, blanching them

By turning up their under-natures till  
They trembled in dilation. O delight  
And triumph of the poet, who would  
say

A man's mere "yes," a woman's com-  
mon "no,"

A little human hope of that or this.  
And says the word so that it burns  
you through

With a special revelation, shakes the  
heart

Of all the men and women in the  
world,

As if one came back from the dead,  
and spoke,

With eyes too happy, a familiar thing  
Become divine i' the utterance! while  
for him

The poet, speaker, he expands with  
joy:

The palpitating angel in his flesh  
Thrills inly with consenting fellow-  
ship

To those innumerable spirits who sun  
themselves

Outside of time.

O life! O poetry,  
— Which means life in life! cognizant  
of life

Beyond this blood-beat, passionate for  
truth

Beyond these senses!— poetry, my  
life,

My eagle, with both grappling feet  
still hot

From Zeus's thunder, who hast rav-  
ished me

Away from all the shepherds, sheep,  
and dogs,

And set me in the Olympian roar and  
round

Of luminous faces for a eup-bearer,  
To keep the mouths of all the god-  
heads moist

For everlasting laughters, — I myself  
Half drunk across the beaker with  
their eyes!

How those gods look!

Enough so, Ganymede,

We shall not bear above a round or  
two.

We drop the golden cup at Heré's  
foot,

And swoon back to the earth, and  
find ourselves

Face down among the pine-cones, cold  
with dew,

While the dogs bark, and many a  
shepherd scoffs,

"What's now come to the youth?"

Such ups and downs

Have poets.

Am I such indeed? The name  
Is royal, and to sign it like a queen

Is what I dare not,—though some  
royal blood

Would seem to tingle in me now and  
then,

With sense of power and ache,— with  
inposthumes

And manias usual to the race. How-  
beit

I dare not: 'tis too easy to go mad  
And ape a Bourbon in a crown of  
straws:

The thing's too common.

Many fervent souls  
Strike rhyme on rhyme, who would  
strike steel on steel,

If steel had offered, in a restless heat  
Of doing something. Many tender  
souls

Have strung their losses on a rhyming  
thread,

As children, cowslips: the more pains  
they take,

The work more withers. Young men,  
ay, and maids,

Too often sow their wild oats in tame  
verse,

Before they sit down under their own  
vine,

And live for use. Alas! near all the  
birds

Will sing at dawn; and yet we do not  
take

The chattering swallow for the holy  
lark.

In those days, though, I never an-  
alyzed,

Not even myself. Analysis comes  
late.

You catch a sight of Nature earliest  
In full front sun-face, and your eye-  
lids wink

And drop before the wonder of't: you  
miss

The form, through seeing the light. I  
lived those days,

And wrote because I lived— unli-  
censed else:

My heart beat in my brain. Life's vio-  
lent flood

Abolished bounds; and which my  
neighbor's field,

Which mine, what mattered? It is  
thus in youth.



We play at leap-frog over the god  
Term;  
The love within us and the love with-  
out  
Are mixed, confounded: if we are  
loved, or love,  
We scarce distinguish. Thus with  
other power:  
Being acted on and acting seem the  
same.  
In that first onrush of life's chariot-  
wheels,  
We know not if the forests move, or  
we.

And so, like most young poets, in a  
flush  
Of individual life I poured myself  
Along the veins of others, and  
achieved  
Mere lifeless imitations of live verse,  
And made the living answer for the  
dead,  
Profaning nature. "Touch not, do  
not taste,  
Nor handle," — we're too legal, who  
write young:  
We beat the phorminx till we hurt  
our thumbs,  
As if still ignorant of counterpoint;  
We call the Muse, — "O Muse, be-  
nignant Muse!" —  
As if we had seen her purple-braided  
head,  
With the eyes in it, start between the  
boughs  
As often as a stag's. What make-  
believe,  
With so much earnest! what effete  
results  
From virile efforts! what cold wire-  
drawn odes,  
From such white heats! — bucolics,  
where the cows  
Would scare the writer if they  
splashed the mud  
In lashing off the flies; didactics,  
driven  
Against the heels of what the master  
said;  
And counterfeiting epics, shrill with  
trumps  
A babe might blow between two  
straining cheeks  
Of bubbled rose, to make his mother  
laugh;  
And elegiac griefs, and songs of love,  
Like cast-off nose-gays picked up on  
the road,

The worse for being warm: all these  
things, writ  
On happy mornings, with a morning  
heart,  
That leaps for love, is active for resolve,  
Weak for art only. Oft the ancient  
forms  
Will thrill, indeed, in carrying the  
young blood.  
The wine-skins, now and then a little  
warped,  
Will crack even, as the new wine  
gurgles in.  
Spare the old bottles! Spill not the  
new wine.

By Keats's soul, the man who never  
stepped  
In gradual progress like another man.  
But, turning grandly on his central  
self,  
Ensphered himself in twenty perfect  
years,  
And died, not young (the life of a  
long life  
Distilled to a mere drop, falling like a  
tear  
Upon the world's cold cheek to make  
it burn  
Forever), — by that strong excepted  
soul  
I count it strange and hard to under-  
stand  
That nearly all young poets should  
write old;  
That Pope was sexagenary at sixteen,  
And beardless Byron academical,  
And so with others. It may be, per-  
haps,  
Such have not settled long and deep  
enough  
In trance to attain to clairvoyance;  
and still  
The memory mixes with the vision,  
spoils,  
And works it turbid.

Or perhaps, again,  
In order to discover the Muse-Sphinx,  
The melancholy desert must sweep  
round,  
Behind you as before.

For me, I wrote  
False poems, like the rest, and thought  
them true  
Because myself was true in writing  
them.  
I, peradventure, have writ true ones  
since  
With less complacence.

But I could not hide  
 My quickening inner life from those  
 at watch.  
 They saw a light at a window now  
 and then  
 They had not set there : who had set  
 it there ?  
 My father's sister started when she  
 caught  
 My soul agaze in my eyes. She could  
 not say  
 I had no business with a sort of soul ;  
 But plainly she objected, and de-  
 murred  
 That souls were dangerous things to  
 carry straight  
 Through all the spilt saltpetre of the  
 world.  
 She said sometimes, "Aurora, have  
 you done  
 Your task this morning ? have you  
 read that book ?  
 And are you ready for the crochet  
 here ?" —  
 As if she said, "I know there's some-  
 thing wrong ;  
 I know I have not ground you down  
 enough  
 To flatten and bake you to a whole-  
 some crust,  
 For household usés and proprieties,  
 Before the rain has got into my barn,  
 And set the grains a-sprouting. What,  
 you're green  
 With outdoor impudence ? you al-  
 most grow ?"  
 To which I answered, "Would she  
 hear my task,  
 And verify my abstract of the book ?  
 Or should I sit down to the crochet-  
 work ?  
 Was such her pleasure ?" Then I  
 sate and teased  
 The patient needle till it spilt the  
 thread,  
 Which oozed off from it in meander-  
 ing lace  
 From hour to hour. I was not there-  
 fore sad ;  
 My soul was singing at a work apart,  
 Behind the wall of sense, as safe from  
 harm  
 As sings the lark when sucked up out  
 of sight  
 In vortices of glory and blue air.  
  
 And so, through forced work and  
 spontaneous work,  
 The inner life informed the outer life,

Reduced the irregular blood to a set-  
 tled rhythm,  
 Made cool the forehead with fresh-  
 sprinkling dreams,  
 And rounding to the spheric soul the  
 thin,  
 Pined body, struck a color up the  
 cheeks,  
 Though somewhat faint. I clinched  
 my brows across  
 My blue eyes, greatening in the look-  
 ing-glass,  
 And said, "We'll live, Aurora ! we'll  
 be strong.  
 The dogs are on us ; but we will not  
 die."

Whoever lives true life will love true  
 love.  
 I learnt to love that England. Very  
 oft,  
 Before the day was born, or otherwise  
 Through secret windings of the after-  
 noons,  
 I threw my hunters off, and plunged  
 myself  
 Among the deep hills, as a hunted  
 stag  
 Will take the waters, shivering with  
 the fear  
 And passion of the course. And  
 when at last  
 Escaped, so many a green slope built  
 on slope  
 Betwixt me and the enemy's house  
 behind,  
 I dared to rest, or wander in a rest  
 Made sweeter for the step upon the  
 grass,  
 And view the ground's most gentle  
 dimplement  
 (As if God's finger touched, but did  
 not press,  
 In making England) ; such an up-and-  
 down  
 Of verdure, nothing too much up or  
 down,  
 A ripple of land ; such little hills the  
 sky  
 Can stoop to tenderly, and the wheat-  
 fields elimb ;  
 Such nooks of valleys lined with  
 orchises,  
 Fed full of noises by invisible  
 streams ;  
 And open pastures where you searee-  
 ly tell  
 White daisies from white dew ; at  
 intervals

The mythic oaks and elm-trees stand-  
ing out  
Self-poised upon their prodigy of  
shade, —  
I thought my father's land was wor-  
thy too  
Of being my Shakspeare's.

Very oft alone,  
Unlicensed; not unfrequently with  
leave  
To walk the third with Romney and  
his friend  
The rising painter, Vincent Carring-  
ton,  
Whom men judge hardly as bee-bon-  
neted.  
Because he holds that, paint a body  
well.  
You paint a soul by implication, like  
The grand first Master. Pleasant  
walks; for if  
He said, "When I was last in Italy,"  
It sounded as an instrument that's  
played  
Too far off for the tune, and yet it's fine  
To listen.

Offer we walked only two.  
If cousin Romney pleased to walk  
with me.  
We read, or talked, or quarrelled, as  
it chanced.

We were not lovers, nor even friends  
well matched:

Say, rather, scholars upon different  
tracks.

And thinkers disagreed, — he, over-  
full

Of what is, and I, haply, overbold  
For what might be.

But then the thrushes sang,  
And shook my pulses and the elm's  
new leaves;

At which I turned, and held my fin-  
ger up.

And bade him mark, that howsoe'er  
the world

Went ill, as he related, certainly  
The thrushes still sang in it. At the  
word

His brow would soften; and he bore  
with me

In melancholy patience, not unkind,  
While, breaking into voluble ecstasy,  
I flattered all the beauteous country  
round.

As poets use, — the skies, the clouds,  
the fields.

The happy violets hiding from the  
roads

The primroses run down to, carrying  
gold;

The tangled hedgerows, where the  
cows push out

Impatient horns and tolerant churn-  
ing mouths

'Twixt dripping ash-boughs; hedge-  
rows all alive

With birds and gnats, and large white  
butterflies

Which look as if the Mayflower had  
caught life.

And palpitated forth upon the wind;  
Hills, vales, woods, netted in a silver  
mist:

Farms, granges, doubled up among  
the hills:

And cattle grazing in the watered  
vales;

And cottage-chimneys smoking from  
the woods;

And cottage-gardens smelling every-  
where.

Confused with smell of orchards.  
"See!" I said,

"And see! is not God with us on the  
earth?"

And shall we put him down by aught  
we do?

Who says there's nothing for the poor  
and vile

Save poverty and wickedness? Be-  
hold!"

And ankle-deep in English grass I  
leaped,

And clapped my hands, and called  
all very fair.

In the beginning, when God called all  
good,

Even then, was evil near us, it is  
writ:

But we indeed who call things good  
and fair,

The evil is upon us while we speak:  
Deliver us from evil, let us pray.

## SECOND BOOK.

TIMES followed one another. Came a  
morn

I stood upon the brink of twenty  
years,

And looked before and after, as I  
stood

Woman and artist, either incomplete,

Both credulous of completion. There  
 I held  
 The whole creation in my little cup,  
 And smiled with thirsty lips before I  
 drank  
 "Good health to you and me, sweet  
 neighbor mine,  
 And all these peoples."  
 I was glad that day;  
 The June was in me, with its multi-  
 tudes  
 Of nightingales all singing in the  
 dark,  
 And rosebuds reddening where the  
 calyx split.  
 I felt so young, so strong, so sure of  
 God,  
 So glad, I could not choose be very  
 wise,  
 And, old at twenty, was inclined to  
 pull  
 My childhood backward in a childish  
 jest  
 To see the face of't once more, and  
 farewell!  
 In which fantastic mood I bounded  
 forth  
 At early morning, would not wait so  
 long  
 As even to snatch my bonnet by the  
 strings,  
 But, brushing a green trail across the  
 lawn  
 With my gown in the dew, took will  
 and way  
 Among the acacias of the shrubber-  
 ies,  
 To fly my fancies in the open air,  
 And keep my birthday till my aun-  
 t  
 awoke  
 To stop good dreams. Meanwhile I  
 murmured on  
 As honeyed bees keep humming to  
 themselves,  
 "The worthiest poets have remained  
 uncrowned  
 Till death has bleached their fore-  
 heads to the bone;  
 And so with me it must be, unless I  
 prove  
 Unworthy of the grand adversity;  
 And certainly I would not fail so  
 much.  
 What, therefore, if I crown myself to-  
 day  
 In sport, not pride, to learn the feel of  
 it  
 Before my brows be numbed as  
 Dante's own

To all the tender pricking of such  
 leaves?  
 Such leaves! what leaves?  
 I pulled the branches down  
 To choose from.  
 "Not the bay! I choose no bay,  
 (The fates deny us if we are overbold)  
 Nor myrtle, which means chiefly love;  
 and love  
 Is something awful, which one dares  
 not touch  
 So early o' mornings. This verbena  
 strains  
 The point of passionate fragrance;  
 and hard by  
 This guelder-rose, at far too slight a  
 beck  
 Of the wind, will toss about her  
 flower-apples.  
 Ah, there's my choice, that ivy on the  
 wall,  
 That headlong ivy! not a leaf will  
 grow  
 But thinking of a wreath. Large  
 leaves, smooth leaves,  
 Serrated like my vines, and half as  
 green.  
 I like such ivy, bold to leap a height  
 'Twas strong to climb; as good to  
 grow on graves  
 As twist about a thyrsus; pretty too,  
 (And that's not ill) when twisted  
 round a comb."

Thus speaking to myself, half singing  
 it,  
 Because some thoughts are fashioned  
 like a bell,  
 To ring with once being touched, I  
 drew a wreath  
 Drenched, blinding me with dew,  
 across my brow,  
 And, fastening it behind so, turning  
 faced  
 . . . My public!—cousin Romney—  
 with a mouth  
 Twice graver than his eyes.  
 I stood there fixed,  
 My arms up, like the caryatid, sole  
 Of some abolished temple, helplessly  
 Persistent in a gesture which derides  
 A former purpose. Yet my blush was  
 flame,  
 As if from flax, not stone.  
 "Aurora Leigh,  
 The earliest of Auroras!"  
 Hand stretched out  
 I clasped, as shipwrecked men will  
 clasp a hand,



“ I stood there fixed,  
My arms up, like the caryatid.” — Page 20.



Indifferent to the sort of palm. The  
 tide  
 Had caught me at my pastime, writing  
 down  
 My foolish name too near upon the sea,  
 Which drowned me with a blush as  
 foolish. "You,  
 My cousin!"

The smile died out in his eyes,  
 And dropped upon his lips, a cold  
 dead weight,  
 For just a moment, "Here's a book  
 I found;  
 No name writ on it — poems, by the  
 form;  
 Some Greek upon the margin; lady's  
 Greek  
 Without the accents. Read it? Not  
 a word.  
 I saw at once the thing had witchcraft  
 in't,  
 Whereof the reading calls up danger-  
 ous spirits:

I rather bring it to the witch."  
 "My book.  
 You found it" . . .

"In the hollow by the stream  
 That beech leans down into, of which  
 you said  
 The Oread in it has a Naiad's heart,  
 And pines for waters."

"Thank you."  
 "Thanks to *you*  
 My cousin, that I have seen you not  
 too much  
 Witch, scholar, poet, dreamer, and  
 the rest,  
 To be a woman also."

With a glance  
 The smile rose in his eyes again, and  
 touched

The ivy on my forehead, light as air.  
 I answered gravely, "Poets needs  
 must be,

Or men or women, more's the pity."

"Ah,  
 But men, and still less women, hap-  
 pily,

Scarce need be poets. Keep to the  
 green wreath,

Since even dreaming of the stone and  
 bronze

Brings headaches, pretty cousin, and  
 defiles

The clean white morning dresses."

"So you judge,  
 Because I love the beautiful I must  
 Love pleasure chiefly, and be over-  
 charged

For ease and whiteness! well, you  
 know the world,  
 And only miss your cousin: 'tis not  
 much.

But learn this: I would rather take  
 my part

With God's dead, who afford to walk  
 in white,

Yet spread his glory, than keep quiet  
 here,

And gather up my feet from even a  
 step,

For fear to soil my gown in so much  
 dust.

I choose to walk at all risks. Here,  
 if heads

That hold a rhythmic thought must  
 ache perforce,

For my part I choose headaches, —  
 and to-day's my birthday."

"Dear Aurora, choose instead  
 To cure them. You have balsams."

"I perceive.  
 The headache is too noble for my sex.  
 You think the heartache would sound

decenter,

Since that's the woman's special,  
 proper ache,

And altogether tolerable, except  
 To a woman."

Saying which, I loosed my wreath,  
 And swinging it beside me as I

walked,  
 Half petulant, half playful, as we  
 walked,

I sent a sidelong look to find his  
 thought,

As falcon set on falconer's finger  
 may,

With sidelong head, and startled,  
 braving eye,

Which means, "You'll see, you'll  
 see! I'll soon take flight.

You shall not hinder." He, as shak-  
 ing out

His hand, and answering, "Fly,  
 then," did not speak,

Except by such a gesture. Silently

We paced, until, just coming into  
 sight

Of the house-windows, he abruptly  
 caught

At one end of the swinging wreath,  
 and said,

"Aurora!" There I stopped short,  
 breath and all.

"Aurora, let's be serious, and throw  
 by

<p>This game of head and heart. Life means, be sure, Both heart and head,—both active, both complete, And both in earnest. Men and women make The world, as head and heart make human life. Work, man, work, woman, since there's work to do In this beleaguered earth for head and heart; And thought can never do the work of love: But work for ends, I mean for uses, not For such sleek fringes (do you call them ends, Still less God's glory?) as we sew ourselves Upon the velvet of those baldaquins Held 'twixt us and the sun. That book of yours I have not read a page of; but I toss A rose up—it falls calyx down, you see! The chances are, that being a woman, young And pure, with such a pair of large, calm eyes, You write as well . . . and ill . . . upon the whole, As other women. If as well, what then? If even a little better . . . still, what then? We want the best in art now, or no art. The time is done for facile settings-up Of minnow-gods, nymphs here, and tritons there: The polytheists have gone out in God, That unity of bests. No best, no God! And so with art, we say. Give art's divine, Direct, indubitable, real as grief, Or, leave us to the grief, we grow ourselves Divine by overcoming with mere hope And most prosaic patience. You, you are young As Eve with nature's daybreak on her face; But this same world you are come to, dearest coz, Has done with keeping birthdays, saves her wreaths</p>	<p>To hang upon her ruins, and forgets To rhyme the cry with which she still beats back Those savage, hungry dogs that hunt her down To the empty grave of Christ. The world's hard pressed: The sweat of labor in the early curse Has (turning acrid in six thousand years) Become the sweat of torture. Who has time, An hour's time . . . think!—to sit upon a bank, And hear the cymbal tinkle in white hands? When Egypt's slain, I say, let Miriam sing!— Before—where's Moses?" "Ah, exactly that. Where's Moses? Is a Moses to be found? You'll seek him vainly in the bulrushes, While I in vain touch cymbals. Yet concede, Such sounding brass has done some actual good (The application in a woman's hand, If that were credible, being scarcely spoilt), In colonizing beehives." "There it is! You play beside a death-bed like a child, Yet measure to yourself a prophet's place To teach the living. None of all these things Can women understand. You generalize, Oh, nothing,—not even grief! Your quick-breathed hearts, So sympathetic to the personal pang, Close on each separate knife-stroke, yielding up A whole life at each wound, incapable Of deepening, widening a large lap of life To hold the world-full woe. The human race To you means such a child, or such a man, You saw one morning waiting in the cold Beside that gate, perhaps. You gather up A few such cases, and when strong sometimes</p>
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Will write of factories and of slaves,  
 as if  
 Your father were a negro, and your  
 son  
 A spinner in the mills. All's yours  
 and you,  
 All colored with your blood, or other-  
 wise  
 Just nothing to you. Why, I call  
 you hard  
 To general suffering. Here's the  
 world half-blind  
 With intellectual light, half-brutal-  
 ized  
 With civilization, having caught the  
 plague  
 In silks from Tarsus, shrieking east  
 and west  
 Along a thousand railroads, mad with  
 pain  
 And sin too! . . . does one woman  
 of you all  
 (You who weep easily) grow pale to  
 see  
 This tiger shake his cage? Does one  
 of you  
 Stand still from dancing, stop from  
 stringing pearls,  
 And pine and die, because of the  
 great sum  
 Of universal anguish? Show me a tear  
 Wet as Cordelia's in eyes bright as  
 yours,  
 Because the world is mad. You can-  
 not count  
 That you should weep for this ac-  
 count, not you!  
 You weep for what you know. A red-  
 haired child  
 Sick in a fever, if you touch him  
 once,  
 Though but so little as with a finger-  
 tip,  
 Will set you weeping; but a million  
 sick . . .  
 You could as soon weep for the rule  
 of three  
 Or compound fractions. Therefore  
 this same world  
 Uncomprehended by you, must re-  
 main  
 Uninfluenced by you. Women as  
 you are,  
 Mere women, personal and passion-  
 ate,  
 You give us doating mothers, and  
 perfect wives,  
 Sublime Madonnas, and enduring  
 saints:

We get no Christ from you, and verily  
 We shall not get a poet, in my mind."

"With which conclusion you con-  
 clude" . . .

"But this:

That you, Aurora, with the large live  
 brow  
 And steady eyelids, cannot conde-  
 scend  
 To play at art, as children play at  
 swords,  
 To show a pretty spirit, chiefly ad-  
 mired  
 Because true action is impossible.  
 You never can be satisfied with praise  
 Which men give women when they  
 judge a book  
 Not as mere work, but as mere wo-  
 man's work,  
 Expressing the comparative respect,  
 Which means the absolute scorn.  
 'Oh, excellent!  
 What grace, what facile turns, what  
 fluent sweeps,  
 What delicate discernment . . . al-  
 most thought!  
 The book does honor to the sex, we  
 hold.  
 Among our female authors we make  
 room  
 For this fair writer, and congratulate  
 The country that produces in these  
 times  
 Such women, competent to' . . .  
 spell."

"Stop there,"

I answered, burning through his  
 thread of talk  
 With a quick flame of emotion,—  
 "you have read  
 My soul, if not my book, and argue  
 well  
 I would not condescend . . . we will  
 not say  
 To such a kind of praise (a worthless  
 end  
 Is praise of all kinds), but to such a  
 use  
 Of holy art and golden life. I am  
 young,  
 And peradventure weak—you tell  
 me so—  
 Through being a woman. And for  
 all the rest,  
 Take thanks for justice. I would  
 rather dance  
 At fairs on tight-rope, till the babies  
 dropped

Their gingerbread for joy, than shift  
 the types  
 For tolerable verse, intolerable  
 To men who act and suffer. Better  
 far  
 Pursue a frivolous trade by serious  
 means,  
 Than a sublime art frivolously."  
 "You  
 Choose nobler work than either, O  
 moist eyes,  
 And hurrying lips, and heaving heart!  
 We are young,  
 Aurora, you and I. The world, —  
 look round, —  
 The world we're come to late is  
 swollen hard  
 With perished generations and their  
 sins:  
 The civilizer's spade grinds horribly  
 On dead men's bones, and cannot  
 turn up soil  
 That's otherwise than fetid. All  
 success  
 Proves partial failure; all advance  
 implies  
 What's left behind; all triumph,  
 something crushed  
 At the chariot-wheels; all govern-  
 ment, some wrong;  
 And rich men make the poor, who  
 curse the rich,  
 Who agonize together, rich and  
 poor,  
 Under and over, in the social spasm  
 And crisis of the ages. Here's an  
 age  
 That makes its own vocation; here  
 we have stepped  
 Across the bounds of time; here's  
 nought to see,  
 But just the rich man and just Laza-  
 rus,  
 And both in torments with a mediate  
 gulf,  
 Though not a hint of Abraham's  
 bosom. Who,  
 Being man, Aurora, can stand calmly  
 by  
 And view these things, and never  
 tease his soul  
 For some great cure? No physic for  
 this grief,  
 In all the earth and heavens too?"  
 "You believe  
 In God, for your part? — ay? that  
 He who makes  
 Can make good things from ill things,  
 best from worst,

As men plant tulips upon dunghills  
 when  
 They wish them finest?"  
 "True. A death-heat is  
 The same as life-heat, to be accurate;  
 And in all nature is no death at all,  
 As men account of death, so long as  
 God  
 Stands witnessing for life perpetually,  
 By being just God. That's abstract  
 truth, I know,  
 Philosophy, or sympathy with God;  
 But I, I sympathize with man, not  
 God,  
 (I think I was a man for chiefly this,)  
 And, when I stand beside a dying  
 bed,  
 'Tis death to me. Observe: it had  
 not much  
 Consoled the race of mastodons to  
 know,  
 Before they went to fossil, that anon  
 Their place would quicken with the  
 elephant:  
 They were not elephants, but masto-  
 dons;  
 And I, a man, as men are now, and  
 not  
 As men may be hereafter, feel with  
 men  
 In the agonizing present."  
 "Is it so,"  
 I said, "my cousin? Is the world so  
 bad,  
 While I hear nothing of it through  
 the trees?  
 The world was always evil, — but so  
 bad?"  
 "So bad, Aurora. Dear, my soul is  
 gray  
 With poring over the long sum of ill;  
 So much for vice, so much for discon-  
 tent,  
 So much for the necessities of power,  
 So much for the connivances of fear,  
 Coherent in statistical despairs  
 With such a total of distracted life . . .  
 To see it down in figures on a page,  
 Plain, silent, clear, as God sees  
 through the earth  
 The sense of all the graves, — that's  
 terrible  
 For one who is not God, and cannot  
 right  
 The wrong he looks on. May I  
 choose indeed  
 But vow away my years, my means,  
 my aims,

Among the helpers, if there's any help  
In such a social strait? The common  
blood  
That swings along my veins is strong  
enough  
To draw me to this duty."

Then I spoke :  
"I have not stood long on the strand  
of life,  
And these salt waters have had  
scarcely time  
To creep so high up as to wet my  
feet :

I cannot judge these tides—I shall,  
perhaps.

A woman's always younger than a  
man  
At equal years, because she is disal-  
lowed

Maturing by the outdoor sun and air,  
And kept in long-clothes past the age  
to walk.

Ah, well! I know you men judge  
otherwise.

You think a woman ripens as a peach,  
In the checks, chiefly. Pass it to me  
now :

I'm young in age, and younger still,  
I think,

As a woman. But a child may say  
amen

To a bishop's prayer, and feel the way  
it goes.

And I, incapable to loose the knot  
Of social questions, can approve, ap-  
plaud

August compassion, Christian  
thoughts that shoot  
Beyond the vulgar white of personal  
aims.

Accept my reverence."

There he glowed on me  
With all his face and eyes. "No  
other help?"

Said he, "no more than so?"

"What help?" I asked.  
"You'd scorn my help, as Nature's  
self, you say,  
Has scorned to put her music in my  
mouth,

Because a woman's. Do you now  
turn round

And ask for what a woman cannot  
give?"

"For what she only can, I turn and  
ask,"

He answered, catching up my hands  
in his,

And dropping on me from his high-  
eaved brow

The full weight of his soul. "I ask  
for love,

And that, she can; for life in fellow-  
ship

Through bitter duties, that, I know  
she can;

For wifehood—will she?"

"Now," I said, "may God  
Be witness 'twixt us two!" and with  
the word,

Meseemed I floated into a sudden  
light

Above his stature,— "am I proved  
too weak

To stand alone, yet strong enough to  
bear

Such leaners on my shoulder? poor  
to think,

Yet rich enough to sympathize with  
thought?

Incompetent to sing, as blackbirds  
can,

Yet competent to love, like HIM?"

I paused ;  
Perhaps I darkened, as the light-  
house will

That turns upon the sea. "It's al-  
ways so.

Any thing does for a wife."

"Aurora dear,  
And dearly honored," he pressed in  
at once

With eager utterance, "you trans-  
late me ill.

I do not contradict my thought of you,  
Which is most reverent, with another  
thought

Found less so. If your sex is weak  
for art,

(And I who said so did but honor  
you

By using truth in courtship,) it is  
strong

For life and duty. Place your fecund  
heart

In mine, and let us blossom for the  
world

That wants love's color in the gray of  
time.

My talk, meanwhile, is arid to you,  
ay,

Since all my talk can only set you  
where

You look down coldly on the arena-  
heaps

Of headless bodies, shapeless, indis-  
tinct.

The judgment-angel scarce would find  
 his way  
 Through such a heap of generalized  
 distress  
 To the individual man with lips and  
 eyes,  
 Much less Aurora. Ah, my sweet,  
 come down,  
 And hand in hand we'll go where  
 yours shall touch  
 These victims one by one, till, one by  
 one,  
 The formless, nameless trunk of every  
 man  
 Shall seem to wear a head with hair  
 you know,  
 And every woman catch your moth-  
 er's face  
 To melt you into passion."  
 "I am a girl,"  
 I answered slowly: "you do well to  
 name  
 My mother's face. Though far too  
 early, alas!  
 God's hand did interpose 'twixt it  
 and me,  
 I know so much of love as used to  
 shine  
 In that face and another; just so  
 much,  
 No more, indeed, at all. I have not  
 seen  
 So much love since, I pray you par-  
 don me,  
 As answers even to make a marriage  
 with  
 In this cold land of England. What  
 you love  
 Is not a woman, Romney, but a cause:  
 You want a helpmate, not a mistress,  
 sir;  
 A wife to help your ends, in her no end.  
 Your cause is noble, your ends ex-  
 cellent;  
 But I, being most unworthy of these  
 and that,  
 Do otherwise conceive of love. Fare-  
 well!"

"Farewell, Aurora? you reject me  
 thus?"  
 He said.  
 "Sir, you were married long ago.  
 You have a wife already whom you  
 love,—  
 Your social theory. Bless you both,  
 I say.  
 For my part, I am scarcely meek  
 enough

To be the handmaid of a lawful  
 spouse.  
 Do I look a Hagar, think you?"  
 "So you jest."  
 "Nay, so I speak in earnest," I re-  
 plied.  
 "You treat of marriage too much like,  
 at least,  
 A chief apostle: you would bear with  
 you  
 A wife . . . a sister . . . shall we  
 speak it out?—  
 A sister of charity."  
 "Then must it be,  
 Indeed, farewell? And was I so far  
 wrong  
 In hope and in illusion, when I  
 took  
 The woman to be nobler than the  
 man,  
 Yourself the noblest woman in the  
 use  
 And comprehension of what love is,—  
 love  
 That generates the likeness of itself  
 Through all heroic duties? so far  
 wrong  
 In saying bluntly, venturing truth on  
 love,  
 'Come, human creature, love and  
 work with me,'  
 Instead of, 'Lady, thou art wondrous  
 fair,  
 And, where the Graces walk before,  
 the Muse  
 Will follow at the lightning of their  
 eyes,  
 And where the Muse walks, lovers  
 need to creep:  
 Turn round and love me, or I die of  
 love?'"

With quiet indignation I broke in,  
 "You misconceive the question like a  
 man,  
 Who sees a woman as the comple-  
 ment  
 Of his sex merely. You forget too  
 much  
 That every creature, female as the  
 male,  
 Stands single in responsible act and  
 thought  
 As also in birth and death. Whoever  
 says  
 To a loyal woman, 'Love and work  
 with me,'  
 Will get fair answers, if the work and  
 love,

<p>Being good themselves, are good for her, — the best She was born for. Women of a softer mood, Surprised by men when scarcely awake to life, Will sometimes only hear the first word, love, And catch up with it any kind of work, Indifferent, so that dear love go with it. I do not blame such women, though for love They pick much oakum: earth's fan- natics make Too frequently heaven's saints. But <i>me</i> your work Is not the best for, nor your love the best, Nor able to commend the kind of work For love's sake merely. Ah! you force me, sir, To be over-bold in speaking of my- self: I, too, have my vocation, — work to do, The heavens and earth have set me since I changed My father's face for theirs, and, though your world Were twice as wretched as you repre- sent, Most serious work, most necessary work As any of the economists'. Reform, Make trade a Christian possibility, And individual right no general wrong, Wipe out earth's furrows of the thine and mine, And leave one green for men to play at bowls, With innings for them all! . . . what then, indeed, If mortals are not greater by the head Than any of their prosperities? what then, Unless the artist keep up open roads Betwixt the seen and unseen, burst- ing through The best of your conventions with his best, The speakable, imaginable best God bids him speak, to prove what lies beyond Both speech and imagination? A starved man</p>	<p>Exceeds a fat beast: we'll not barter, sir, The beautiful for barley. And, even so, I hold you will not compass your poor ends Of barley-feeding and material ease Without a poet's individualism To work your universal. It takes a soul To move a body: it takes a high-souled man To move the masses even to a cleaner sty: It takes the ideal to blow a hair's- breadth off The dust of the actual. Ah! your Fouriers failed, Because not poets enough to under- stand That life develops from within. For me, Perhaps I am not worthy, as you say, Of work like this: perhaps a woman's soul Aspires, and not creates: yet we as- pire, And yet I'll try out your perhapses, sir, And if I fail . . . why, burn me up my straw Like other false works. I'll not ask for grace: Your scorn is better, cousin Rom- ney. I Who love my art would never wish it lower To suit my stature. I may love my art. You'll grant that even a woman may love art, Seeing that to waste true love on any thing Is womanly, past question." I retain The very last word which I said that day, As you the creaking of the door, years past, Which let upon you such disabling news You ever after have been graver. He, His eyes, the motions in his silent mouth, Were fiery points on which my words were caught, Transfixed forever in my memory For his sake, not their own. And yet I know</p>
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I did not love him . . . nor he me . . .  
 that's sure . . .  
 And what I said is unrepented of,  
 As truth is always. Yet . . . a princely  
 man —  
 If hard to me, heroic for himself.  
 He bears down on me through the  
 slanting years,  
 The stronger for the distance. If he  
 had loved,  
 Ay, loved me, with that retributive  
 face, . . .  
 I might have been a common woman  
 now,  
 And happier, less known, and less left  
 alone,  
 Perhaps a better woman, after all,  
 With chubby children hanging on my  
 neck  
 To keep me low and wise. Ah me!  
 the vines  
 That bear such fruit are proud to  
 stoop with it.  
 The palm stands upright in a realm  
 of sand.

And I, who spoke the truth then,  
 stand upright,  
 Still worthy of having spoken out the  
 truth,  
 By being content I spoke it, though it  
 set  
 Him there, me here. Oh, woman's  
 vile remorse,  
 To hanker after a mere name, a show,  
 A supposition, a potential love!  
 Does every man who names love in  
 our lives  
 Become a power for that? Is love's  
 true thing  
 So much best to us, that what person-  
 ates love  
 Is next best? A potential love for-  
 sooth!  
 I'm not so vile. No, no! He cleaves,  
 I think,  
 This man, this image, chiefly for the  
 wrong  
 And shock he gave my life in finding  
 me  
 Precisely where the devil of my youth  
 Had set me on those mountain peaks  
 of hope,  
 All glittering with the dawn-dew, all  
 erect,  
 And famished for the noon, exclaim-  
 ing, while  
 I looked for empire and much tribute,  
 "Come,

I have some worthy work for thee be-  
 low.  
 Come, sweep my barns, and keep my  
 hospitals,  
 And I will pay thee with a current  
 coin  
 Which men give women."  
 As we spoke, the grass  
 Was trod in haste beside us, and my  
 aunt,  
 With smile distorted by the sun, —  
 face, voice,  
 As much at issue with the summer-  
 day  
 As if you brought a candle out of  
 doors, —  
 Broke in with, "Romney, here! — My  
 child, entreat  
 Your cousin to the house, and have  
 your talk,  
 If girls must talk upon their birth-  
 days. Come."

He answered for me calmly, with pale  
 lips  
 That seemed to motion for a smile in  
 vain.  
 "The talk is ended, madam, where  
 we stand.  
 Your brother's daughter has dismissed  
 me here;  
 And all my answer can be better said  
 Beneath the trees than wrong by  
 such a word  
 Your house's hospitalities. Fare-  
 well."

With that he vanished. I could hear  
 his heel  
 Ring bluntly in the lane as down he  
 leapt  
 The short way from us. Then a  
 measured speech  
 Withdrew me. "What means this,  
 Aurora Leigh?  
 My brother's daughter has dismissed  
 my guests?"

The lion in me felt the keeper's  
 voice  
 Through all its quivering dewlaps: I  
 was quelled  
 Before her, meekened to the child she  
 knew:  
 I prayed her pardon, said "I had  
 little thought  
 To give dismissal to a guest of hers  
 In letting go a friend of mine who  
 came

To take me into service as a wife, —  
No more than that, indeed.”

“No more, no more?  
Pray Heaven,” she answered, “that  
I was not mad.

I could not mean to tell her to her  
face

That Romney Leigh had asked me for  
a wife,

And I refused him?”

“Did he ask?” I said.  
“I think he rather stooped to take  
me up

For certain uses which he found to do  
For something called a wife. He  
never asked.”

“What stuff!” she answered. “Are  
they queens, these girls?

They must have mantles stitched  
with twenty silks,

Spread out upon the ground, before  
they’ll step

One footstep for the noblest lover  
born.”

“But I am born,” I said with firm-  
ness, “I,

To walk another way than his, dear  
aunt.”

“You walk, you walk! A babe at  
thirteen months

Will walk as well as you,” she cried  
in haste,

“Without a steadying finger. Why,  
you child,

God help you! you are groping in the  
dark,

For all this sunlight. You suppose,  
perhaps,

That you, sole offspring of an opulent  
man,

Are rich, and free to choose a way to  
walk?

You think, and it’s a reasonable  
thought,

That I, beside, being well to do in  
life,

Will leave my handful in my niece’s  
hand

When death shall paralyze these fin-  
gers? Pray,

Pray, child, albeit I know you love  
me not,

As if you loved me, that I may not  
die;

For when I die and leave you, out  
you go,

(Unless I make room for you in my  
grave,)

Unhoused, unfed, my dear, poor broth-  
er’s lamb,

(Ah, heaven! that pains) without a  
right to crop

A single blade of grass beneath these  
trees,

Or cast a lamb’s small shadow on the  
lawn,

Unfed, unfolded. Ah, my brother,  
here’s

The fruit you planted in your foreign  
loves!

Ay, there’s the fruit he planted! Never  
look

Astonished at me with your mother’s  
eyes,

For it was they who set you where  
you are,

An undowered orphan. Child, your  
father’s choice

Of that said mother disinherited  
His daughter, his and hers. Men do  
not think

Of sons and daughters when they fall  
in love,

So much more than of sisters: other-  
wise

He would have paused to ponder  
what he did,

And shrunk before that clause in the  
entail

Excluding offspring by a foreign wife,  
(The clause set up a hundred years

ago

By a Leigh who wedded a French  
dancing-girl,

And had his heart danced over in re-  
turn;)

But this man shrank at nothing, never  
thought

Of you, Aurora, any more than me.  
Your mother must have been a pretty

thing,

For all the coarse Italian blacks and  
browns,

To make a good man, which my broth-  
er was,

Unchary of the duties to his house;  
But so it fell indeed. Our cousin

Vane,  
Vane Leigh, the father of this Rom-  
ney, wrote,

Directly on your birth, to Italy:  
‘I ask your baby-daughter for my

son,  
In whom the entail now merges by  
the law,

Betroth her to us out of love, instead  
 Of colder reasons, and she shall not lose  
 By love or law from henceforth: ' so he wrote.  
 A generous cousin was my cousin Vane.  
 Remember how he drew you to his knee  
 The year you came here, just before he died,  
 And hollowed out his hands to hold your cheeks,  
 And wished them redder: you remember Vane?  
 And now his son, who represents our house,  
 And holds the fiefs and manors in his place,  
 To whom reverts my pittance when I die,  
 (Except a few books and a pair of shawls) —  
 The boy is generous like him, and prepared  
 To carry out his kindest word and thought  
 To you, Aurora. Yes, a fine young man  
 Is Romney Leigh, although the sun of youth  
 Has shone too straight upon his brain, I know,  
 And fevered him with dreams of doing good  
 To good-for-nothing people. But a wife  
 Will put all right, and stroke his temples cool  
 With healthy touches." . . .  
 I broke in at that.  
 I could not lift my heavy heart to breathe  
 Till then; but then I raised it, and it fell  
 In broken words like these, — "No need to wait:  
 The dream of doing good to . . . me, at least,  
 Is ended, without waiting for a wife  
 To cool the fever for him. We've escaped  
 That danger — thank Heaven for it."  
 "You," she cried,  
 "Have got a fever. What, I talk and talk  
 An hour long to you, I instruct you how

You cannot eat, or drink, or stand, or sit,  
 Or even die, like any decent wretch  
 In all this unroofed and unfurnished world,  
 Without your cousin, and you still maintain  
 There's room 'twixt him and you for flirting fans,  
 And running knots in eyebrows?  
 You must have  
 A pattern lover sighing on his knee?  
 You do not count enough a noble heart  
 (Above book-patterns) which this very morn  
 Unclosed itself in two dear fathers' names  
 To embrace your orphaned life? Fie, fie!  
 But stay,  
 I write a word, and counteract this sin."  
 She would have turned to leave me, but I clung.  
 "Oh, sweet my father's sister, hear my word  
 Before you write yours. Cousin Vane did well,  
 And cousin Romney well, and I well too,  
 In casting back with all my strength and will  
 The good they meant me. O my God, my God!  
 God meant me good, too, when he hindered me  
 From saying 'yes' this morning. If you write  
 A word, it shall be 'no.' I say no, no!  
 I tie up 'no' upon his altar-horns  
 Quite out of reach of perjury! At least  
 My soul is not a pauper: I can live  
 At least my soul's life, without alms from men;  
 And if it must be in heaven instead of earth,  
 Let heaven look to it: I am not afraid."  
 She seized my hands with both hers, strained them fast,  
 And drew her probing and unscrupulous eyes  
 Right through me, body and heart.  
 "Yet, foolish sweet,



You love this man. I've watched you  
when he came,  
And when he went, and when we've  
talked of him.  
I am not old for nothing; I can tell  
The weather-signs of love: you love  
this man."

Girls blush sometimes because they  
are alive,  
Half wishing they were dead to save  
the shame.  
The sudden blush devours them, neck  
and brow:

They have drawn too near the fire of  
life, like gnats,  
And flare up bodily, wings and all.  
What then?

Who's sorry for a gnat . . . or girl?

I blushed.  
I feel the brand upon my forehead  
now

Strike hot, sear deep, as guiltless  
men may feel

The felon's iron, say, and scorn the  
mark

Of what they are not. Most illogical,  
Irrational nature of our womanhood,  
That blushes one way, feels another  
way,

And prays, perhaps, another. After  
all,

We cannot be the equal of the male,  
Who rules his blood a little.

For although  
I blushed indeed, as if I loved the  
man,

And her incisive smile, accrediting  
That treason of false witness in my  
blush,

Did bow me downward like a swathe  
of grass

Below its level that struck me, I at-  
test

The conscious skies and all their daily  
suns,

I think I loved him not, — nor then,  
nor since,

Nor ever. Do we love the school-  
master,

Being busy in the woods? much less,  
being poor,

The overseer of the parish? Do we  
keep

Our love to pay our debts with?

White and cold  
I grew next moment. As my blood  
recoiled

From that imputed ignominy, I made

My heart great with it. Then, at last,  
I spoke,  
Spoke veritable words, but passion-  
ate,

Too passionate perhaps . . . ground  
up with sobs

To shapeless endings. She let fall  
my hands

And took her smile off in sedate dis-  
gust,

As peradventure she had touched a  
snake, —

A dead snake, mind! — and, turning  
round, replied,

"We'll leave Italian manners, if you  
please.

I think you had an English father,  
child,

And ought to find it possible to speak  
A quiet 'yes' or 'no,' like English

girls,  
Without convulsions. In another

month  
We'll take another answer, — no, or  
yes."

With that, she left me in the garden-  
walk.

I had a father! yes, but long ago, —  
How long it seemed that moment!

Oh, how far,  
How far and safe, God, dost thou

keep thy saints,  
When once gone from us! We may

call against  
The lighted windows of thy fair June

heaven,  
Where all the souls are happy, and

not one,  
Not even my father, look from work

or play  
To ask, "Who is it that cries after us

Below there, in the dusk?" Yet for-  
merly

He turned his face upon me quick  
enough,

If I said, "Father." Now I might cry  
loud:

The little lark reached higher with  
his song

Than I with crying. Oh, alone,  
alone,

Not troubling any in heaven, nor any  
on earth,

I stood there in the garden, and  
looked up

The deaf blue sky that brings the  
roses out

On such June mornings.

<p>You who keep account Of crisis and transition in this life, Set down the first time Nature says plain "no" To some "yes" in you, and walks over you In gorgeous sweeps of scorn. We all begin By singing with the birds, and run- ning fast With June days, hand in hand; but once, for all, The birds must sing against us, and the sun Strike down upon us like a friend's sword caught By an enemy to slay us, while we read The dear name on the blade which bites at us! That's bitter and convincing. After that, We seldom doubt that something in the large, Smooth order of creation, though no more Than haply a man's footstep, has gone wrong.</p> <p>Some tears fell down my cheeks, and then I smiled, As those smile who have no face in the world To smile back to them. I had lost a friend In Romney Leigh. The thing was sure,—a friend Who had looked at me most gently now and then, And spoken of my favorite books, "our books," With such a voice! Well, voice and look were now More utterly shut out from me, I felt, Than even my father's. Romney now was turned To a benefactor, to a generous man, Who had tied himself to marry . . . me, instead Of such a woman, with low timorous lids He lifted with a sudden word one day, And left, perhaps, for my sake. Ah, self-tied By a contract, male Iphigenia bound At a fatal Aulis for the winds to change, (But loose him, they'll not change,) he well might seem</p>	<p>A little cold and dominant in love; He had a right to be dogmatical, This poor, good Romney. Love to him was made A simple law-clause. If I married him, I should not dare to call my soul my own Which so he had bought and paid for: every thought And every heart-beat down there in the bill; Not one found honestly deductible From any use that pleased him! He might eat My body into coins to give away Among his other paupers; change my sons, While I stood dumb as Griseld, for black babes Or piteous foundlings; might un- questioned set My right hand teaching in the ragged schools, My left hand washing in the public baths, What time my angel of the Ideal stretched Both his to me in vain. I could not claim The poor right of a mouse in a trap to squeal, And take so much as pity from my- self.</p> <p>Farewell, good Romney! if I loved you even, I could but ill afford to let you be So generous to me. Farewell, friend, since friend Betwixt us two, forsooth, must be a word So heavily overladen. And, since help Must come to me from those who love me not, Farewell, all helpers: I must help myself, And am alone from henceforth. Then I stooped And lifted the soiled garland from the earth, And set it on my head as bitterly As when the Spanish monarch crowned the bones Of his dead love. So be it. I pre- serve That crown still, in the drawer there: 'twas the first;</p>
---	---

The rest are like it, those Olympian  
crowns  
We run for till we lose sight of the  
sun  
In the dust of the racing chariots.

After that,  
Before the evening fell, I had a note,  
Which ran, — "Aurora, sweet Chal-  
dæan, you read  
My meaning backward, like your east-  
ern books,

While I am from the west, dear. Read  
me now  
A little plainer. Did you hate me  
quite  
But yesterday? I loved you for my  
part;

I love you. If I spoke untenderly  
This morning, my beloved, pardon it,  
And comprehend me that I loved  
you so

I set you on the level of my soul,  
And overwashed you with the bitter  
brine

Of some habitual thoughts. Hence-  
forth, my flower,  
Be planted out of reach of any such,  
And lean the side you please with all  
your leaves.

Write woman's verses and dream  
woman's dreams;

But let me feel your perfume in my  
home  
To make my sabbath after working-  
days.

Bloom out your youth beside me; be  
my wife."

I wrote in answer: "We Chaldæans  
discern

Still further than we read. I know  
your heart,

And shut it like the holy book it is,  
Reserved for mild-eyed saints to pore  
upon

Betwixt their prayers at vespers.  
Well, you're right,

I did not surely hate you yesterday;  
And yet I do not love you enough  
to-day

To wed you, cousin Romney. Take  
this word,

And let it stop you as a generous man  
From speaking further. You may  
tease, indeed,

And blow about my feelings, or my  
leaves;

And here's my aunt will help you  
with east winds,

And break a stalk, perhaps, torment-  
ing me:

But certain flowers grow near as deep  
as trees:

And, cousin, you'll not move my  
root, not you,

With all your confluent storms. Then  
let me grow

Within my wayside hedge, and pass  
your way.

This flower has never as much to say  
to you

As the antique tomb which said to  
travellers, 'Pause,'

'Siste, viator.''' Ending thus, I  
sighed.

The next week passed in silence, so  
the next,

And several after: Romney did not  
come,

Nor my aunt ehide me. I lived on  
and on,

As if my heart were kept beneath a  
glass,

And everybody stood, all eyes and  
ears

To see and hear it tick. I could not  
sit,

Nor walk, nor take a book, nor lay it  
down,

Nor sew on steadily, nor drop a stitch  
And a sigh with it, but I felt her looks  
Still cleaving to me, like the sucking  
asp

To Cleopatra's breast, persistently  
Through the intermittent pantings.

Being observed  
When observation is not sympathy

Is just being tortured. If she said a  
word,

A "thank you," or an "if it please  
you, dear,"

She meant a commination, or at best  
An exorcism against the devildom

Which plainly held me. So with all  
the house.

Susannah could not stand and twist  
my hair,

Without such glancing at the looking-  
glass

To see my face there, that she missed  
the plait.

And John — I never sent my plate for  
soup,

Or did not send it, but the foolish  
John

Resolved the problem, 'twixt his nap-  
kined thumbs,

Of what was signified by taking soup,  
Or choosing mackerel. Neighbors  
    who dropped in  
On morning visits, feeling a joint  
    wrong,  
Smiled admonition, sate uneasily,  
And talked with measured, empha-  
    sized reserve,  
Of parish news, like doctors to the  
    sick,  
When not called in, — as if, with leave  
    to speak,  
They might say something. Nay, the  
    very dog  
Would watch me from his sun-patch  
    on the floor,  
In alternation with the large black fly  
Not yet in reach of snapping. So I  
    lived.

A Roman died so, — smeared with  
    honey, teased  
By insects, stared to torture by the  
    noon;  
And many patient souls 'neath Eng-  
    lish roofs  
Have died like Romans. I, in look-  
    ing back,  
Wish only now I had borne the  
    plague of all  
With ineeker spirits than were rife at  
    Rome.

For on the sixth week the dead sea  
    broke up,  
Dashed suddenly through beneath  
    the heel of Him  
Who stands upon the sea and earth,  
    and swears  
Time shall be nevermore. The clock  
    struck nine  
That morning too; no lark was out  
    of tune;  
The hidden farms among the hills  
    breathed straight  
Their smoke toward heaven; the lime-  
    tree scarcely stirred  
Beneath the blue weight of the cloud-  
    less sky,  
Though still the July air came float-  
    ing through  
The woodbine at my window, in and  
    out,  
With touches of the out-door coun-  
    try news  
For a bending forehead. There I  
    sate, and wished  
That morning-truce of God would  
    last till eve,

Or longer. "Sleep," I thought, "late  
    sleepers; sleep,  
And spare me yet the burden of your  
    eyes."

Then suddenly a single ghastly shriek  
Tore upward from the bottom of the  
    house.

Like one who wakens in a grave, and  
    shrieks,

The still house seemed to shriek it-  
    self alive,

And shudder through its passages  
    and stairs,

With slam of doors and clash of bells.  
    I sprang,

I stood up in the middle of the room,  
And there confronted at my chamber-  
    door

A white face, shivering, ineffectual  
    lips.

"Come, come!" they tried to utter,  
    and I went.

As if a ghost had drawn me at the  
    point

Of a fiery finger through the uneven  
    dark,

I went with reeling footsteps down  
    the stair,

Nor asked a question.

There she sate, my aunt,  
Bolt upright in the chair beside her  
    bed,

Whose pillow had no dint. She had  
    used no bed

For that night's sleeping, yet slept  
    well. My God!

The dumb derision of that gray,  
    peaked face

Concluded something grave against  
    the sun,

Which filled the chamber with its  
    July burst,

When Susan drew the curtains, igno-  
    rant

Of who sate open-eyed behind her.  
    There

She sate . . . it sate . . . we said  
    "she" yesterday . . .

And held a letter with unbroken seal,  
As Susan gave it to her hand last  
    night.

All night she had held it. If its news  
    referred

To duchies or to dunghills, not an  
    inch

She'd budge, 'twas obvious, for such  
    worthless odds;

Nor, though the stars were suns, and  
 overburned  
 Their spheric limitations, swallowing  
 up  
 Like wax the azure spaces, could they  
 force  
 Those open eyes to wink once. What  
 last sight  
 Had left them blank and flat so, draw-  
 ing out  
 The faculty of vision from the roots,  
 As nothing more, worth seeing, re-  
 mained behind?

Were those the eyes that watched me,  
 worried me?  
 That dogged me up and down the  
 hours and days,  
 A beaten, breathless, miserable soul?  
 And did I pray, a half-hour back, but  
 so,  
 To escape the burden of those eyes  
 . . . those eyes?  
 "Sleep late," I said?

Why now, indeed, they sleep.  
 God answers sharp and sudden on  
 some prayers,  
 And thrusts the thing we have prayed  
 for in our face,  
 A gauntlet with a gift in't. Every  
 wish  
 Is like a prayer, with God.

I had my wish,  
 To read and meditate the thing I  
 would,  
 To fashion all my life upon my  
 thought,  
 And marry, or not marry. Hence-  
 forth none  
 Could disapprove me, vex me, hamper  
 me.

Full ground-room in this desert new-  
 ly made,  
 For Babylon or Balbec, when the  
 breath,  
 Now choked with sand, returns for  
 building towns.

The heir came over on the funeral  
 day,  
 And we two cousins met before the  
 dead  
 With two pale faces. Was it death,  
 or life,  
 That moved us? When the will was  
 read and done,  
 The official guests and witnesses  
 withdrawn,  
 We rose up, in a silence almost hard,

And looked at one another. Then I  
 said,  
 "Farewell, my cousin."

But he touched, just touched  
 My hatstrings tied for going (at the  
 door

The carriage stood to take me), and  
 said low,  
 His voice a little unsteady through  
 his smile,

"Siste, viator."  
 "Is there time," I asked,  
 "In these last days of railroads, to  
 stop short,

Like Cæsar's chariot (weighing half a  
 ton,  
 On the Appian road, for morals?"

"There is time,"  
 He answered grave, "for necessary  
 words,

Inclusive, trust me, of no epitaph  
 On man or act, my cousin. We have  
 read

A will which gives you all the per-  
 sonal goods  
 And funded moneys of your aunt."

"I thank  
 Her memory for it. With three hun-  
 dred pounds,

We buy in England, even, clear  
 standing-room

To stand and work in. Only two  
 hours since  
 I fancied I was poor."

"And, cousin, still  
 You're richer than you fancy. The  
 will says,

*Three hundred pounds, and any other  
 sum  
 Of which the said testatrix dies pos-  
 sessed.*

I say she died possessed of other  
 sums."

"Dear Romney, need we chronicle  
 the pence?

I'm richer than I thought: that's evi-  
 dent.

Enough so."

"Listen, rather. You've to do  
 With business and a cousin," he re-  
 sumed;

"And both, I fear, need patience.  
 Here's the fact.

The other sum (there *is* another  
 sum,

Unspecified in any will which dates  
 After possession, yet bequeathed as  
 much

And clearly as those said three hundred pounds)  
Is thirty thousand. You will have it paid  
When? . . . where? My duty troubles you with words."

He struck the iron when the bar was hot:  
No wonder if my eyes sent out some sparks.  
"Pause there! I thank you. You are delicate  
In glozing gifts; but I, who share your blood,  
Am rather made for giving, like yourself,  
Than taking, like your pensioners. Farewell."

He stopped me with a gesture of calm pride.  
"A Leigh," he said, "gives largesse, and gives love,  
But glozes never: if a Leigh could gloze,  
He would not do it, moreover, to a Leigh,  
With blood trained up along nine centuries  
To hound and hate a lie from eyes like yours.  
And now we'll make the rest as clear.  
Your aunt  
Possessed these moneys."

"You will make it clear, My cousin, as the honor of us both,  
Or one of us speaks vainly. That's not I.  
My aunt possessed this sum—inherited  
From whom, and when? Bring documents, prove dates."

"Why, now indeed you throw your bonnet off  
As if you had time left for a logarithm!  
The faith's the want. Dear cousin, give me faith,  
And you shall walk this road with silken shoes,  
As clean as any lady of our house  
Supposed the proudest. Oh, I comprehend  
The whole position from your point of sight.  
I oust you from your father's halls and lands,

And make you poor by getting rich—that's law;  
Considering which, in common circumstance

You would not scruple to accept from me

Some compensation, some sufficiency  
Of income—that were justice; but, alas!

I love you—that's mere nature; you reject

My love—that's nature also; and at once

You cannot, from a suitor disallowed,  
A hand thrown back, as mine is, into yours,

Receive a doit, a farthing,—not for the world!

That's woman's etiquette, and obviously

Exceeds the claim of nature, law, and right,

Unanswerable to all. I grant, you see,  
The case as you conceive it; leave you room

To sweep your ample skirts of womanhood,

While, standing humbly squeezed against the wall,

I own myself excluded from being just,

Restrained from paying indubitable debts,

Because denied from giving you my soul.

That's my misfortune. I submit to it  
As if, in some more reasonable age,

'Twould not be less inevitable.  
Enough.

You'll trust me, cousin, as a gentleman,

To keep your honor, as you count it, pure,

Your scruples (just as if I thought them wise)

Safe, and inviolate from gifts of mine."

I answered mild but earnest: "I believe

In no one's honor which another keeps,

Nor man's nor woman's. As I keep, myself,

My truth and my religion, I depute  
No father, though I had one this side

death,

Nor brother, though I had twenty,  
much less you,

Though twice my cousin, and once  
 Romney Leigh,  
 To keep my honor pure. You face  
 to-day  
 A man who wants instruction, mark  
 me, not  
 A woman who wants protection. As  
 to a man,  
 Show manhood, speak out plainly,  
 be precise  
 With facts and dates. My aunt in-  
 herited  
 This sum, you say" —

"I said she died possessed  
 Of this, dear cousin."

"Not by heritage.  
 Thank you: we're getting to the facts  
 at last.  
 Perhaps she played at commerce with  
 a ship

Which came in heavy with Austr-  
 alian gold?

Or touched a lottery with her finger-  
 end,

Which tumbled on a sudden into her  
 lap

Some old Rhine tower or principal-  
 ity?

Perhaps she had to do with a marine  
 Sub-transatlantic railroad which pre-  
 pays

As well as presupposes? or perhaps  
 Some stale ancestral debt was after-  
 paid

By a hundred years, and took her by  
 surprise?

You shake your head, my cousin: I  
 guess ill."

"You need not guess, Aurora, nor de-  
 ride:

The truth is not afraid of hurting you.  
 You'll find no cause in all your scrup-  
 les, why

Your aunt should cavil at a deed of  
 gift

"Twixt her and me."

"I thought so — ah! a gift."

"You naturally thought so," he re-  
 sumed.

"A very natural gift."

"A gift, a gift!  
 Her individual life being stranded  
 high

Above all want, approaching opu-  
 lence,

Too haughty was she to accept a  
 gift

Without some ultimate aim. Ah, ah,  
 I see! —

A gift intended plainly for her  
 heirs,

And so accepted . . . if accepted . . .  
 ah,

Indeed that might be: I am snared  
 perhaps

Just so. But, cousin, shall I pardon  
 you,

If thus you have caught me with a  
 cruel springe?"

He answered gently, "Need you  
 tremble and pant

Like a netted lioness? Is't my fault,  
 mine,

That you're a grand wild creature of  
 the woods,

And hate the stall built for you? Any  
 way,

Though triply netted, need you glare  
 at me?

I do not hold the cords of such a net:  
 You're free from me, Aurora."

"Now may God  
 Deliver me from this strait! This  
 gift of yours

Was tendered . . . when? accepted  
 . . . when?" I asked.

"A month . . . a fortnight since?  
 Six weeks ago

It was not tendered: by a word she  
 dropped

I know it was not tendered nor re-  
 ceived.

When was it? Bring your dates."

"What matters when?  
 A half-hour ere she died, or a half-  
 year,

Secured the gift, maintains the heri-  
 tage

Inviolable with law. As easy pluck  
 The golden stars from heaven's em-  
 broidered stole

To pin them on the gray side of this  
 earth,

As make you poor again, thank  
 God!"

"Not poor  
 Nor clean again from henceforth, you  
 thank God?

Well, sir — I ask you . . . I insist at  
 need . . .

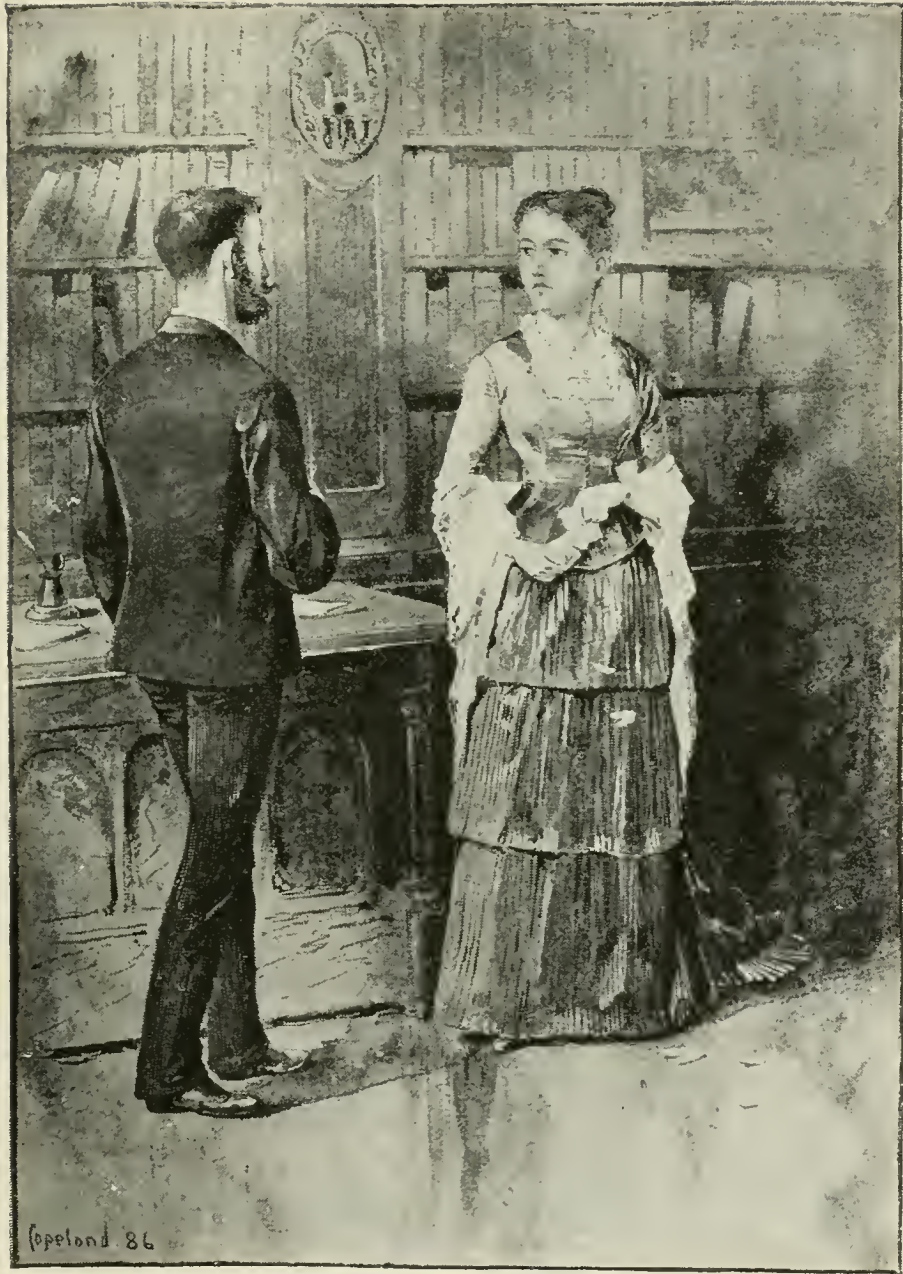
Vouchsafe the special date, the spe-  
 cial date."

"The day before her death-day," he  
 replied,

"The gift was in her hands. We'll  
     find that deed,  
 And certify that date to you."      As one  
 Who has climbed a mountain-height,  
     and carried up  
 His own heart climbing, panting, in  
     his throat  
 With the toil of the ascent, takes  
     breath at last,  
 Looks back in triumph, so I stood  
     and looked.  
 "Dear cousin Romney, we have  
     reached the top  
 Of this steep question, and may rest,  
     I think.  
 But first, I pray you pardon that the  
     shock  
 And surge of natural feeling and  
     event  
 Has made me oblivious of acquaint-  
     ing you  
 That this — this letter (unread, mark,  
     still sealed)  
 Was found infolded in the poor dead  
     hand.  
 That spirit of hers had gone beyond  
     the address,  
 Which could not find her, though you  
     wrote it clear.  
 I know your writing, Romney,— recog-  
     nize  
 The open-hearted A, the liberal sweep  
 Of the G. Now listen. Let us under-  
     stand:  
 You will not find that famous deed  
     of gift,  
 Unless you find it in the letter here,  
 Which, not being mine, I give you  
     back. Refuse  
 To take the letter? Well, then, you  
     and I,  
 As writer and as heiress, open it  
 Together, by your leave. Exactly  
     so:  
 The words in which the noble offer-  
     ing's made  
 Are nobler still, my cousin; and I  
     own  
 The proudest and most delicate heart  
     alive,  
 Distracted from the measure of the  
     gift  
 By such a grace in giving, might ac-  
     cept  
 Your largesse without thinking any  
     more  
 Of the burthen of it than King Solo-  
     mon

Considered, when he wore his holy  
     ring  
 Charactered over with the ineffable  
     spell,  
 How many carats of fine gold made  
     up  
 Its money-value. So Leigh gives to  
     Leigh!  
 Or rather might have given, observe,  
     — for that's  
 The point we come to. Here's a  
     proof of gift;  
 But here's no proof, sir, of accep-  
     tancy,  
 But, rather, disproof. Death's black  
     dust, being blown,  
 Infiltrated through every secret fold  
 Of this sealed letter by a puff of fate,  
 Dried up forever the fresh-written  
     ink,  
 Annulled the gift, disutilized the  
     grace,  
 And left these fragments."      As I spoke, I tore  
 The paper up and down, and down  
     and up,  
 And crosswise, till it fluttered from  
     my hands,  
 As forest-leaves, stripped suddenly,  
     and rapt  
 By a whirlwind on Valdarno, drop  
     again, —  
 Drop slow, and strew the melancholy  
     ground  
 Before the amazed hills . . . why so,  
     indeed,  
 I'm writing like a poet, somewhat  
     large  
 In the type of the image, and exag-  
     gerate  
 A small thing with a great thing, top-  
     ping it;  
 But then I'm thinking how his eyes  
     looked, his,  
 With what despondent and surprised  
     reproach!  
 I think the tears were in them as he  
     looked;  
 I think the manly mouth just trem-  
     bled. Then  
 He broke the silence.  
     "I may ask, perhaps,  
 Although no stranger . . . only Rom-  
     ney Leigh,  
 Which means still less . . . than Vin-  
     cent Carrington,  
 Your plans in going hence, and where  
     you go.  
 This cannot be a secret."





“As I spoke I tore the paper up and down  
— till it fluttered from my hands.” — Page 35.

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"All my life  
 Is open to you, cousin. I go hence  
 To London, to the gathering-place of  
 souls,  
 To live mine straight out, vocally, in  
 books;  
 Harmoniously for others, if indeed  
 A woman's soul, like man's, be wide  
 enough  
 To carry the whole octave (that's to  
 prove);  
 Or, if I fail, still purely for myself.  
 Pray God be with me, Romney."  
 "Ah, poor child!  
 Who fight against the mother's 'tiring  
 hand,  
 And choose the headsman's. May  
 God change his world  
 For your sake, sweet, and make it  
 mild as heaven,  
 And juster than I have found you."  
 But I paused.  
 "And you, my cousin?"  
 "I," he said — "you ask?  
 You care to ask? Well, girls have  
 curious minds,  
 And fain would know the end of  
 every thing,  
 Of cousins, therefore, with the rest.  
 For me,  
 Aurora, I've my work: you know my  
 work;  
 And, having missed this year some  
 personal hope.  
 I must beware the rather that I miss  
 No reasonable duty. While you sing  
 Your happy pastorals of the meads  
 and trees,  
 Bethink you that I go to impress and  
 prove  
 On stifled brains and deafened ears,  
 stunned deaf,  
 Crushed dull with grief, that nature  
 sings itself,  
 And needs no mediate poet, lute, or  
 voice  
 To make it vocal. While you ask of  
 men  
 Your audience, I may get their leave,  
 perhaps,  
 For hungry orphans to say audibly,  
 'We're hungry, see;' for beaten and  
 bullied wives  
 To hold their unweaned babies up in  
 sight,  
 Whom orphanage would better: and  
 for all  
 To speak and claim their portion . . .  
 by no means

Of the soil . . . but of the sweat in  
 tilling it;  
 Since this is nowadays turned privi-  
 lege,  
 To have only God's curse on us, and  
 not man's.  
 Such work I have for doing, elbow-  
 deep  
 In social problems, as you tie your  
 rhymes,  
 To draw my uses to cohere with  
 needs,  
 And bring the uneven world back to  
 its round,  
 Or, failing so much, fill up, bridge at  
 least  
 To smother issues, some abysmal  
 cracks  
 And feuds of earth intestine heats  
 have made  
 To keep men separate, using sorry  
 shifts  
 Of hospitals, almshouses, infant  
 schools,  
 And other practical stuff of partial  
 good  
 You lovers of the beautiful and whole  
 Despise by system."  
 "I despise? The scorn  
 Is yours, my cousin. Poets become  
 such  
 Through scorning nothing. You de-  
 cry them for  
 The good of beauty sung and taught  
 by them;  
 While they respect your practical  
 partial good  
 As being a part of beauty's self.  
 Adieu!  
 When God helps all the workers for  
 his world,  
 The singers shall have help of him,  
 not last."

He smiled as men smile when they  
 will not speak  
 Because of something bitter in the  
 thought;  
 And still I feel his melancholy eyes  
 Look judgment on me. It is seven  
 years since.  
 I know not if 'twas pity or 'twas  
 scorn  
 Has made them so far-reaching:  
 judge it, ye  
 Who have had to do with pity more  
 than love,  
 And scorn than hatred. I am used,  
 since then,

To other ways from equal men. But  
 Even <sup>so,</sup> we let go hands, my cousin  
 and I,  
 And in between us rushed the torrent-  
 world  
 To blanch our faces like divided  
 rocks,  
 And bar forever mutual sight and  
 touch,  
 Except through swirl of spray and all  
 that roar.

### THIRD BOOK.

“TO-DAY thou girdest up thy loins  
 thyself,  
 And goest where thou wouldest:  
 presently  
 Others shall gird thee,” said the  
 Lord, “to go  
 Where thou wouldest not.” He spoke  
 to Peter thus,  
 To signify the death which he should  
 die  
 When crucified head downward.

If he spoke  
 To Peter then, he speaks to us the  
 same.  
 The word suits many different mar-  
 tyrdoms,  
 And signifies a multiform of death,  
 Although we scarcely die apostles, we,  
 And have mislaid the keys of heaven  
 and earth.

For 'tis not in mere death that men  
 die most;  
 And, after our first girding of the  
 loins  
 In youth's fine linen and fair broidery  
 To run up hill and meet the rising  
 sun,  
 We are apt to sit tired, patient as a  
 fool,  
 While others gird us with the violent  
 bands  
 Of social figments, feints, and formal-  
 isms,  
 Reversing our straight nature, lifting  
 up  
 Our base needs, keeping down our  
 lofty thoughts,  
 Head downward on the cross-sticks  
 of the world.

Yet he can pluck us from that shame-  
 ful cross.  
 God, set our feet low and our forehead  
 high,  
 And show us how a man was made to  
 walk!

Leave the lamp, Susan, and go up to  
 bed:  
 The room does very well. I have to  
 write  
 Beyond the stroke of midnight. Get  
 away:  
 Your steps, forever buzzing in the  
 room,  
 Tease me like gnats. Ah, letters!  
 Throw them down  
 At once, as I must have them, to be  
 sure,  
 Whether I bid you never bring me  
 such  
 At such an hour, or bid you. No ex-  
 cuse:  
 You choose to bring them, as I choose,  
 perhaps,  
 To throw them in the fire. Now get  
 to bed,  
 And dream, if possible, I am not  
 cross.

Why, what a pettish, petty thing I  
 grow!—  
 A mere, mere woman, a mere flaccid  
 nerve,  
 A kerelief left out all night in the  
 rain,  
 Turned soft so,—overtasked and over-  
 strained  
 And overlived in this close London  
 life.  
 And yet I should be stronger.

Never burn  
 Your letters, poor Aurora; for they  
 stare  
 With red seals from the table, saying  
 each,  
 “Here's something that you know  
 not.” Out, alas!  
 'Tis scarcely that the world's more  
 good and wise,  
 Or even straighter and more conse-  
 quent,  
 Since yesterday at this time; yet,  
 again,  
 If but one angel spoke from Ararat,  
 I should be very sorry not to hear:  
 So open all the letters, let me read.  
 Blanche Ord, the writer in the  
 “Lady's Fan,”

Requests my judgment on . . . that,  
afterwards.  
Kate Ward desires the model of my  
cloak,  
And signs, "Elisha to you." Pringle  
Sharpe  
Presents his work on "Social Con-  
duct," craves  
A little money for his pressing  
debts . . .  
From me, who scarce have money for  
my needs;  
Art's fiery chariot which we journey  
in  
Being apt to singe our singing-ropes  
to holes,  
Although you ask me for my cloak,  
Kate Ward.  
Here's Rudgey knows it, editor and  
scribe:  
He's "forced to marry where his  
heart is not,  
Because the purse lacks where he lost  
his heart."  
Ah — lost it because no one picked it  
up:  
That's really loss (and passable im-  
pudence).  
My critic Hammond flatters prettily,  
And wants another volume like the  
last.  
My critic Belfair wants another book  
Entirely different, which will sell,  
(and live?)  
A striking book, yet not a startling  
book,  
The public blames originalities,  
(You must not pump spring-water  
unawares  
Upon a gracious public full of nerves:)  
Good things, not subtle, new yet or-  
thodox.  
As easy reading as the dog-eared page  
That's fingered by said public fifty  
years,  
Since first taught spelling by its  
grandmother,  
And yet a revelation in some sort:  
That's hard, my critic Belfair. So —  
what next?  
My critic Stokes objects to abstract  
thoughts.  
"Call a man John, a woman Joan,"  
says he  
"And do not prate so of *humanities*:"  
Whereat I call my critic simply  
Stokes.  
My critic Jobson recommends more  
mirth,

Because a cheerful genius suits the  
times,  
And all true poets laugh unquencha-  
bly  
Like Shakspeare and the gods. That's  
very hard.  
The gods may laugh, and Shakspeare;  
Dante smiled  
With such a needy heart on two pale  
lips,  
We cry, "Weep, rather, Dante."  
Poems are  
Men, if true poems; and who dares  
exclaim  
At any man's door, "Here, 'tis un-  
derstood  
The thunder fell last week and killed  
a wife,  
And scared a sickly husband: what  
of that?  
Get up, be merry, shout, and clap  
your hands,  
Because a cheerful genius suits the  
times?  
None says so to the man; and why,  
indeed,  
Should any to the poem? A ninth  
seal;  
The apocalypse is drawing to a close.  
Ha — this from Vincent Carrington,  
— "Dear friend,  
I want good counsel. Will you lend  
me wings  
To raise me to the subject in a sketch  
I'll bring to-morrow — may I? — at  
eleven?  
A poet's only born to turn to use,  
So save you! for the world . . . and  
Carrington."  
(Writ after.) "Have you heard of  
Romney Leigh,  
Beyond what's said of him in news-  
papers,  
His phalansteries there, his speeches  
here,  
His pamphlets, pleas, and statements  
everywhere?  
He dropped *me* long ago; but no one  
drops  
A golden apple, though, indeed, one  
day  
You hinted that, but jested. Well,  
at least  
You know Lord Howe, who sees him  
. . . whom he sees,  
And *you* see, and I hate to see, — for  
Howe  
Stands high upon the brink of theo-  
ries,

<p>Observes the swimmers, and cries,      'Very fine!'      But keeps dry linen equally, — unlike      That gallant breaster, Romney.      Strange it is,      Such sudden madness seizing a young      man      To make earth over again, while I'm      content      To make the pictures. Let me bring      the sketch:      A tiptoe Danae, overbold and hot,      Both arms aflame to meet her wish-      ing Jove      Halfway, and burn him faster down;      the face      And breasts upturned and straining,      the loose locks      All glowing with the anticipated gold.      Or here's another on the self-same      theme.      She lies here, flat upon her prison-      floor,      The long hair swathed about her to      the heel      Like wet seaweed. You dimly see      her through      The glittering haze of that prodigious      rain,      Half blotted out of nature by a love      As heavy as fate. I'll bring you      either sketch.      I think, myself, the second indicates      More passion."              Surely. Self is put away,      And calm with abdication. She is      Jove,      And no more Danae — greater thus.      Perhaps      The painter symbolizes unaware      Two states of the recipient artist-      soul,      One, forward, personal, wanting rev-      erence,      Because aspiring only. We'll be      calm,      And know, that, when indeed our      Joves come down,      We all turn stiller than we have ever      been.</p> <p>Kind Vincent Carrington. I'll let      him come.      He talks of Florence, and may say a      word      Of something as it chanced seven      years ago, —      A hedgehog in the path, or a lame      bird,</p>	<p>In those green country walks, in that      good time      When certainly I was so misera-      ble . . .      I seem to have missed a blessing ever      since.</p> <p>The music soars within the little lark,      And the lark soars. It is not thus      with men.      We do not make our places with our      strains,      Content, while they rise, to remain      behind      Alone on earth, instead of so in heav-      en.      No matter: I bear on my broken tale.</p> <p>When Romney Leigh and I had      parted thus,      I took a chamber up three flights of      stairs      Not far from being as steep as some      larks climb,      And there, in a certain house in Ken-      sington,      Three years I lived and worked. Get      leave to work      In this world — 'tis the best you get      at all;      For God, in cursing, gives us better      gifts      Than men in benediction. God says,      "Sweat      For foreheads:" men say, "Crowns."      And so we are crowned,      Ay, gashed by some tormenting circle      of steel      Which snaps with a secret spring.      Get work, get work!      Be sure 'tis better than what you work      to get.</p> <p>Serene, and unafraid of solitude,      I worked the short days out, and      watched the sun      On lurid morns or monstrous after-      noons      (Like some Druidic idol's fiery brass,      With fixed unflickering outline of      dead heat,      From which the blood of wretches      pent inside      Seems oozing forth to incarnadine the      air)      Push out through fog with his dilated      disk,      And startle the slant roofs and chim-      ney-pots</p>
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<p>With splashes of fierce color. Or I  <sup>saw</sup>          Fog only — the great tawny weltering          fog —          Involve the passive city, strangle it          Alive, and draw it off into the void, —          Spires, bridges, streets, and squares, —          as if a sponge          Had wiped out London, or as noon          and night          Had clapped together, and utterly          struck out          The intermediate time, undoing them-          selves          In the act. Your city poets see such          things          Not despicable. Mountains of the          south,          When, drunk and mad with elemental          wines          They rend the seamless mist, and          stand up bare,          Make fewer singers, haply. No one          sings,          Descending Sinai: on Parnassus-          mount          You take a mule to climb, and not a          muse,          Except in fable and figure: forests          chant          Their anthems to themselves, and          leave you dumb.          But sit in London at the day's de-          cline,          And view the city perish in the          mist          Like Pharaoh's armaments in the          deep Red Sea,          The chariots, horsemen, footmen, all          the host,          Sucked down and choked to silence —          then, surprised          By a sudden sense of vision and of          tune,          You feel as conquerors, though you          did not fight;          And you and Israel's other singing          girls,          Ay, Miriam with them, sing the song          you choose.</p> <p>I worked with patience, which means          almost power.          I did some excellent things indiffer-          ently,          Some bad things excellently. Both          were praised,          The latter loudest. And by such a          time</p>	<p>That I myself had set them down as          sins          Scarce worth the price of sackcloth,          week by week          Arrived some letter through the sedu-          lous post,          Like these I've read, and yet dissimi-          lar,          With pretty maiden seals, — initials          twined          Of lilies, or a heart marked <i>Emily</i>.          (Convicting Emily of being all heart;) Or rarer tokens from young bache-          lers,          Who wrote from college with the          same goosequill,          Suppose, they had just been plucked          of, and a snatch          From Horace, "Collegisse juvat,"          set          Upon the first page. Many a letter,          signed          Or unsigned, showing the writers at          eighteen          Had lived too long, although a muse          should help          Their dawn by holding candles, —          compliments          To smile or sigh at. Such could pass          with me          No more than coins from Moscow cir-          culate          At Paris: would ten roubles buy a          tag          Of ribbon on the boulevard, worth a          sou?          I smiled that all this youth should          love me, sighed          That such a love could scarcely raise          them up          To love what was more worthy than          myself;          Then sighed again, again, less gener-          ously,          To think the very love they lavished          so          Proved me inferior. The strong loved          me not,          And he . . . my cousin Romney . . .          did not write.          I felt the silent finger of his scorn          Prick every bubble of my frivolous          fame          As my breath blew it, and resolve it          back          To the air it came from. Oh, I justi-          fied          The measure he had taken of my          height:</p>
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The thing was plain—he was not  
     wrong a line;  
 I played at art, made thrusts with a  
     toy-sword,  
 Amused the lads and maidens.  
                     Came a sigh  
 Deep, hoarse with resolution,—I  
     would work  
 To better ends, or play in earnest.  
     “Heavens,  
 I think I should be almost popu-  
     lar  
 If this went on!”—I ripped my  
     verses up,  
 And found no blood upon the rapier’s  
     point;  
 The heart in them was just an em-  
     bryo’s heart,  
 Which never yet had beat, that it  
     should die;  
 Just gasps of make-believe galvanic  
     life;  
 Mere tones, inorganized to any tune.  
  
 And yet I felt it in me where it  
     burnt,  
 Like those hot fire-seeds of creation  
     held  
 In Jove’s clenched palm before the  
     worlds were sown;  
 But I—I was not Juno even! my  
     hand  
 Was shut in weak convulsion, wo-  
     man’s ill;  
 And when I yearned to loose a finger  
     — lo,  
 The nerve revolted. ’Tis the same  
     even now:  
 This hand may never haply open  
     large,  
 Before the spark is quenched, or the  
     palm charred,  
 To prove the power not else than by  
     the pain.  
  
 It burnt, it burns—my whole life  
     burnt with it;  
 And light, not sunlight and not torch-  
     light, flashed  
 My steps out through the slow and  
     difficult road.  
 I had grown distrustful of too forward  
     springs,  
 The season’s books in drear signifi-  
     cance  
 Of morals, dropping round me. Live-  
     ly books?  
 The ash has livelier verdure than the  
     yew;

And yet the yew’s green longer, and  
     alone  
 Found worthy of the holy Christmas  
     time:  
 We’ll plant more yews if possible,  
     albeit  
 We plant the graveyards with them.  
                     Day and night  
 I worked my rhythmic thought, and  
     furrowed up  
 Both watch and slumber with long  
     lines of life  
 Which did not suit their season. The  
     rose fell  
 From either cheek, my eyes globed  
     luminous  
 Through orbits of blue shadow, and  
     my pulse  
 Would shudder along the purple-  
     veined wrist  
 Like a shot bird. Youth’s stern, set  
     face to face  
 With youth’s ideal; and when peo-  
     ple came  
 And said, “You work too much, you  
     are looking ill,”  
 I smiled for pity of them who pitied  
     me,  
 And thought I should be better soon,  
     perhaps,  
 For those ill looks. Observe, “I”  
     means in youth  
 Just *I*, the conscious and eternal soul  
 With all its ends, and not the out-  
     side life,  
 The parcel-man, the doublet of the  
     flesh,  
 The so much liver, lung, integument,  
 Which make the sum of “*I*” here-  
     after, when  
 World-talkers talk of doing well or  
     ill.  
*I* prosper if I gain a step, although  
 A nail then pierced my foot: although  
     my brain,  
 Embracing any truth, froze para-  
     lyzed,  
*I* prosper: I but change my instru-  
     ment;  
 I break the spade off, digging deep  
     for gold,  
 And catch the mattock up.  
                     I worked on, on.  
 Through all the bristling fence of  
     nights and days  
 Which hedges time in from the eter-  
     nities  
 I struggled, never stopped to note  
     the stakes



Which hurt me in my course. The  
 midnight oil  
 Would stink sometimes; there came  
 some vulgar needs:  
 I had to live that therefore I might  
 work,  
 And, being but poor, I was con-  
 strained, for life,  
 To work with one hand for the book-  
 sellers  
 While working with the other for my-  
 self  
 And art: you swim with feet, as well  
 as hands,  
 Or make small way. I apprehended  
 this.  
 In England no one lives by verse that  
 lives;  
 And, apprehending, I resolved by  
 prose  
 To make a space to sphere my living  
 verse.  
 I wrote for cyclopædias, magazines,  
 And weekly papers, holding up my  
 name  
 To keep it from the mud. I learnt  
 the use  
 Of the editorial "we" in a review,  
 As courtly ladies the fine trick of  
 trains,  
 And swept it grandly through the  
 open doors,  
 As if one could not pass through  
 doors at all,  
 Save so encumbered. I wrote tales  
 beside,  
 Carved many an article on cherry-  
 stones  
 To suit light readers, — something in  
 the lines  
 Revealing, it was said, the mallet-  
 hand;  
 But that I'll never vouch for. What  
 you do  
 For bread will taste of common grain,  
 not grapes,  
 Although you have a vineyard in  
 Champagne,  
 Much less in Nephelococcygia,  
 As mine was, peradventure.  
 Having bread  
 For just so many days, just breathing-  
 room  
 For body and verse, I stood up  
 straight, and worked  
 My veritable work. And as the  
 soul  
 Which grows within a child makes  
 the child grow,

Or as the fiery sap, the touch from  
 God,  
 Careering through a tree, dilates the  
 bark,  
 And roughs with scale and knob, be-  
 fore it strikes  
 The summer-foliage out in a green  
 flame,  
 So life, in deepening with me, deep-  
 ened all  
 The course I took, the work I did.  
 Indeed,  
 The academic law convinced of sin:  
 The critics cried out on the falling off,  
 Regretting the first manner. But I  
 felt  
 My heart's life throbbing in my verse  
 to show  
 It lived, it also — certes incomplete,  
 Disordered with all Adam in the  
 blood,  
 But even its very tumors, warts, and  
 wens  
 Still organized by and implying life.  
 A lady called upon me on such a day.  
 She had the low voice of your Eng-  
 lish dames, —  
 Unused, it seems, to need rise half a  
 note  
 To catch attention, — and their quiet  
 mood,  
 As if they lived too high above the  
 earth  
 For that to put them out in any thing:  
 So gentle, because verily so proud;  
 So wary and afraid of hurting you,  
 By no means that you are not really  
 vile,  
 But that they would not touch you  
 with their foot  
 To push you to your place; so self-  
 possessed,  
 Yet gracious and conciliating, it takes  
 An effort in their presence to speak  
 truth:  
 You know the sort of woman, — bril-  
 liant stuff,  
 And out of nature. "Lady Walde-  
 mar."  
 She said her name quite simply, as if  
 it meant  
 Not much, indeed, but something;  
 took my hands,  
 And smiled as if her smile could help  
 my case,  
 And dropped her eyes on me, and let  
 them melt.  
 "Is this," she said, "the muse?"

“No sibyl, even,”  
I answered, “since she fails to guess  
the cause  
Which taxed you with this visit,  
madam.”

“Good,”  
She said. “I value what’s sincere at  
once.

Perhaps, if I had found a literal muse,  
The visit might have taxed me. As  
it is,

You wear your blue so chiefly in your  
eyes,

My fair Aurora, in a frank, good way,  
It comforts me entirely for your fame,  
As well as for the trouble of ascent  
To this Olympus.”

There a silver laugh  
Ran rippling through her quickened  
little breaths  
The steep stair somewhat justified.

“But still  
Your ladyship has left me curious why  
You dared the risk of finding the said  
muse?”

“Ah, keep me, notwithstanding, to  
the point,  
Like any pedant? Is the blue in eyes  
As awful as in stockings, after all,  
I wonder, that you’d have my busi-  
ness out

Before I breathe — exact the epic  
plunge  
In spite of gasps? Well, naturally  
you think

I’ve come here, as the lion-hunters go  
To deserts, to secure you with a trap  
For exhibition in my drawing-rooms  
On zoölogie soirées? not in the least.  
Roar softly at me: I am frivolous,  
I dare say; I have played at wild-  
beast shows

Like other women of my class, — but  
now

I meet my lion simply as Androcles  
Met his . . . when at his mercy.”

So, she bent  
Her head as queens may mock, then,  
lifting up  
Her eyelids with a real grave queenly  
look,

Which ruled, and would not spare,  
not even herself, —

“I think you have a cousin, — Rom-  
ney Leigh.”

“You bring a word from *him*?” — my  
eyes leapt up

To the very height of hers, — “a word  
from *him*?”

“I bring a word about him actually.  
But first” (she pressed me with her  
urgent eyes),

“You do not love him, — you?”  
“You’re frank at least  
In putting questions, madam,” I  
replied.

“I love my cousin cousinly — no  
more.”

“I guessed as much. I’m ready to  
be frank

In answering also, if you’ll question  
me,

Or even for something less. You  
stand outside,

You artist women, of the common  
sex;

You share not with us, and exceed us  
so

Perhaps by what you’re muled in,  
your hearts

Being starved to make your heads:  
so run the old

Traditions of you. I can therefore  
speak

Without the natural shame which  
creatures feel,

When speaking on their level, to  
their like.

There’s many a papist she, would  
rather die

Than own to her maid she put a rib-  
bon on

To catch the indifferent eye of such a  
man,

Who yet would count adulteries on  
her beads

At holy Mary’s shrine, and never  
blush,

Because the saints are so far off we  
lose

All modesty before them. Thus to-  
day.

’Tis *I* love Romney Leigh.”

“Forbear!” I cried.

“If here’s no muse, still less is any  
saint,

Nor even a friend, that Lady Walde-  
mar

Should make confessions” . . .

“That’s unkindly said.  
If no friend, what forbids to make a  
friend

To join to our confession, ere we have  
done?”

I love your cousin. If it seems unwise  
 To say so, it's still foolisher (we're frank)  
 To feel so. My first husband left me young,  
 And pretty enough, so please you, and rich enough  
 To keep my booth in May-fair with the rest  
 To happy issues. There are marquises  
 Would serve seven years to call me wife, I know,  
 And after seven I might consider it,  
 For there's some comfort in a marquise,  
 When all's said, — yes, but after the seven years;  
 I now love Romney. You put up your lip  
 So like a Leigh! so like him! Pardon me,  
 I'm well aware I do not derogate  
 In loving Romney Leigh. The name is good,  
 The means are excellent; but the man, the man —  
 Heaven help us both, — I am near as mad as he  
 In loving such an one." She slowly swung  
 Her heavy ringlets till they touched her smile,  
 As reasonably sorry for herself,  
 And thus continued: —  
 "Of a truth, Miss Leigh,  
 I have not without struggle come to this.  
 I took a master in the German tongue,  
 I gamed a little, went to Paris twice;  
 But, after all, this love! . . . you eat  
 of love,  
 And do as vile a thing as if you ate  
 Of garlic, which, whatever else you eat,  
 Tastes uniformly acrid, till your peach  
 Reminds you of your onion. Am I  
 coarse?  
 Well, love's coarse, nature's coarse.  
 Ah, there's the rub!  
 We fair fine ladies, who park out our  
 lives  
 From common sheep-paths, cannot  
 help the crows  
 From flying over: we're as natural  
 still  
 As Blowsalinda. Drape us perfectly  
 In Lyons velvet, we are not for that

Lay-figures, look you: we have hearts  
 within, —  
 Warm, live, improvident, indecent  
 hearts,  
 As ready for outrageous ends and  
 acts  
 As any distressed seamstress of them  
 all  
 That Romney groans and toils for.  
 We catch love,  
 And other fevers, in the vulgar way.  
 Love will not be outwitted by our  
 wit,  
 Nor outrun by our equipages: mine  
 Persisted, spite of efforts. All my  
 cards  
 Turned up but Romney Leigh; my  
 German stopped  
 At germane Wertherism; my Paris  
 rounds  
 Returned me from the Champs Ely-  
 sées just  
 A ghost, and sighing like Dido's. I  
 came home  
 Uneured, convicted rather to myself  
 Of being in love . . . in love! That's  
 coarse, you'll say,  
 I'm talking garlie." Coldly I replied:  
 "Apologize for atheism, not love!  
 For me, I do believe in love, and God.  
 I know my cousin; Lady Waldemar  
 I know not: yet I say as much as  
 this, —  
 Whoever loves him, let her not ex-  
 cuse,  
 But cleanse herself, that, loving such  
 a man,  
 She may not do it with such unwor-  
 thy love  
 He cannot stoop and take it." "That is said  
 Ansterely, like a youthful prophets,  
 Who knits her brows across her pret-  
 ty eyes  
 To keep them back from following  
 the gray flight  
 Of doves between the temple-col-  
 umns. Dear,  
 Be kinder with me: let us two be  
 friends.  
 I'm a mere woman, — the more weak,  
 perhaps,  
 Through being so proud; you're bet-  
 ter; as for him,  
 He's best. Indeed, he builds his  
 goodness up  
 So high, it topples down to the other  
 side,

And makes a sort of badness: there's  
the worst  
I have to say against your cousin's  
best.  
And so be mild, Aurora, with my  
worst,  
For his sake, if not mine."

"I own myself  
Incredulous of confidence like this  
Availing him or you."

"And I, myself,  
Of being worthy of him with any love:  
In your sense I am not so; let it  
pass.

And yet I save him if I marry him;  
Let that pass too."

"Pass, pass! we play police  
Upon my cousin's life to indicate  
What may or may not pass?" I cried.

"He knows  
What's worthy of him: the choice re-  
mains with *him*;  
And what he chooses, act or wife, I  
think  
I shall not call unworthy, I, for one."

"'Tis somewhat rashly said," she an-  
swered slow.

"Now let's talk reason, though we  
talk of love.

Your cousin Romney Leigh's a mon-  
ster: there,  
The word's out fairly, let me prove  
the fact.

We'll take, say, that most perfect of  
antiques

They call the Genius of the Vatican,  
(Which seems too beauteous to endure  
itself

In this mixed world, and fasten it for  
once

Upon the torso of the Dancing Faun,  
(Who might limp, surely, if he did not  
dance.)

Instead of Buonarroti's mask: what  
then?

We show the sort of monster Romney  
is,

With godlike virtues and heroic aims  
Subjoined to limping possibilities  
Of mismade human nature. Grant  
the man

Twice godlike, twice heroic, still he  
limps;

And here's the point we come to."

"Pardon me;  
But, Lady Waldemar, the point's the  
thing

We never come to."

"Caustic, insolent  
At need! I like you,"—(there she  
took my hands)

"And now, my lioness, help Andro-  
cles,

For all your roaring. Help me! for  
myself

I would not say so, but for him. He  
limps

So certainly, he'll fall into the pit  
A week hence, — so I lose him, so he  
is lost!

For when he's fairly married, he a  
Leigh,

To a girl of doubtful life, undoubtful  
birth,

Starved out in London till her coarse-  
grained hands

Are whiter than her morals, even  
you

May call his choice unworthy."

He . . . Romney!"

"Ah, you're moved at last, she said.  
"These monsters, set out in the open  
sun,

Of course throw monstrous shadows:  
those who think

Awry will scarce act straightly. Who  
but he?

And who but you can wonder? He  
has been mad,

The whole world knows, since first, a  
nominal man,

He soured the proctors, tried the  
gownsmen's wits

With equal scorn of triangles and  
wine,

And took no honors, yet was honora-  
ble.

They'll tell you he lost count of Ho-  
mer's ships

In Melbourne's poor-bills, Ashley's  
factory-bills;

Ignored the Aspasia we all dare to  
praise,

For other women, dear, we could not  
name

Because we're decent. Well, he had  
some right

On his side, probably: men always  
have,

Who go absurdly wrong. The living  
boor

Who brews your ale exceeds in vital  
worth

Dead Cæsar who 'stops bungholes' in  
the cask.

And also, to do good is excellent,

For persons of his income, even to boors.  
 I sympathize with all such things.  
 But he  
 Went mad upon them . . . madder  
 and more mad  
 From college times to these, as, going  
 down hill,  
 The faster still, the farther. You  
 must know  
 Your Leigh by heart: he has sown his  
 black young curls  
 With bleaching cares of half a million  
 men  
 Already. If you do not starve, or  
 sin,  
 You're nothing to him: pay the in-  
 come-tax,  
 And break your heart upon't, he'll  
 scarce be touched;  
 But come upon the parish, qualified  
 For the parish stocks, and Romney  
 will be there  
 To call you brother, sister, or perhaps  
 A tenderer name still. Had I any  
 chance  
 With Mister Leigh, who am Lady  
 Waldemar,  
 And never committed felony?"  
 "You speak  
 Too bitterly," I said, "for the literal  
 truth."

"The truth is bitter. Here's a man  
 who looks  
 Forever on the ground. You must be  
 low,  
 Or else a pictured ceiling overhead,  
 Good painting thrown away. For me,  
 I've done  
 What women may: we're somewhat  
 limited,  
 We modest women; but I've done my  
 best.  
 —How men are perjured when they  
 swear our eyes  
 Have meaning in them! They're just  
 blue or brown,  
 They just can drop their lids a little.  
 And yet  
 Mine did more; for I read half Fou-  
 rier through,  
 Proudhon, Considerant, and Louis  
 Blanc,  
 With various others of his socialists,  
 And, if I had been a fathom less in  
 love,  
 Had cured myself with gaping. As  
 it was,

I quoted from them prettily enough,  
 Perhaps, to make them sound half  
 rational  
 To a saner man than he whene'er we  
 talked,  
 (For which I dodged occasion;) learnt  
 by heart  
 His speeches in the Commons and  
 elsewhere  
 Upon the social question; heaped re-  
 ports  
 Of wicked women and penitenti-  
 aries  
 On all my tables (with a place for  
 Sue);  
 And gave my name to swell subscrip-  
 tion-lists  
 Toward keeping up the sun at nights  
 in heaven,  
 And other possible ends. All things  
 I did,  
 Except the impossible . . . such as  
 wearing gowns  
 Provided by the Ten Hours' move-  
 ment: there  
 I stopped — we must stop somewhere.  
 He, meanwhile,  
 Unmoved as the Indian tortoise 'neath  
 the world,  
 Let all that noise go on upon his  
 back.  
 He would not disconcert or throw me  
 out;  
 'Twas well to see a woman of my  
 class  
 With such a dawn of conscience. For  
 the heart  
 Made firewood for his sake, and flam-  
 ing up  
 To his face, — he merely warmed his  
 feet at it:  
 Just deigned to let my carriage stop  
 him short  
 In park or street, he leaning on the  
 door  
 With news of the committee which  
 sate last  
 On pickpockets at suck."  
 "You jest, you jest."  
 "As martyrs jest, dear (if you read  
 their lives)  
 Upon the axe which kills them.  
 When all's done  
 By me . . . for him — you'll ask him  
 presently  
 The color of my hair: he cannot tell,  
 Or answers, 'Dark,' at random; while,  
 be sure,

He's absolute on the figure, five or  
ten,  
Of my last subscription. Is it bear-  
able,  
And I a woman?"

"Is it reparable,  
Though *I* were a man?"

"I know not. That's to prove.  
But first, this shameful marriage?"

"Ay?" I cried,  
"Then really there's a marriage?"

"Yesterday  
I held him fast upon it. 'Mister  
Leigh,'

Said I, 'shut up a thing, it makes  
more noise.

The boiling town keeps secrets ill:  
I've known

Yours since last week. Forgive my  
knowledge so:

You feel I'm not the woman of the  
world

The world thinks; you have borne  
with me before,

And used me in your noble work, our  
work,

And now you shall not cast me off  
because

You're at the difficult point, the *join*.  
'Tis true

Even I can scarce admit the eogeneity  
Of such a marriage . . . where you  
do not love,

(Except the class) yet marry, and  
throw your name

Down to the gutter, for a fire-escape  
To future generations! 'tis sublime,

A great example, a true genesis  
Of the opening social era. But take  
heed:

This virtuous act must have a patent  
weight,

Or loses half its virtue. Make it tell,  
Interpret it, and set in the light,

And do not muffle it in a winter-cloak  
As a vulgar bit of shame, — as if, at  
best,

A Leigh had made a misalliance, and  
blushed

A Howard should know it.' Then I  
pressed him more:

'He would not choose,' I said, 'that  
even his kin . . .

Aurora Leigh, even . . . should con-  
ceive his act

Less sacrifice, more fantasy.' At  
which

He grew so pale, dear . . . to the  
lips, I knew

I had touched him. 'Do you know  
her,' he inquired,

'My eousin Aurora?' — 'Yes,' I said,  
and lied,

(But truly we all know you by your  
books)

And so I offered to come straight to  
you,

Explain the subject, justify the cause,  
And take you with me to St. Marg-  
aret's Court

To see this miracle, this Marian Erle,  
This drover's daughter (she's not  
pretty, he swears),

Upon whose finger, exquisitely  
pricked

By a hundred needles, we're to hang  
the tie

'Twixt class and class in England, —  
thus indeed

By such a presence, yours and mine,  
to lift

The match up from the doubtful  
place. At once

He thanked me, sighing, murmured to  
himself,

'She'll do it, perhaps: she's noble,' —  
thanked me twice,

And promised, as my guerdon, to put  
off

His marriage for a month."

I answered then,  
"I understand your drift imperfectly.

You wish to lead me to my cousin's  
betrotted,

To touch her hand if worthy, and hold  
her hand

If feeble, thus to justify his match.  
So be it, then. But how this serves

your ends,  
And how the strange confession of

your love  
Serves this, I have to learn — I can-  
not see."

She knit her restless forehead.  
"Then, despite

Aurora, that most radiant morning  
name,

You're dull as any London afternoon.  
I wanted time, and gained it; want-  
ed *you*,

And gain you! You will come and  
see the girl

In whose most prodigal eyes the lineal  
pearl

And pride of all your lofty race of  
Leighs

Is destined to solution. Authorized

By sight and knowledge, then, you'll  
 speak your mind,  
 And prove to Romney, in your bril-  
 liant way,  
 He'll wrong the people and posterity,  
 (Say such a thing is bad for me and  
 you,  
 And you fail utterly) by concluding  
 thus

An execrable marriage. Break it up,  
 Disroot it; peradventure presently  
 We'll plant a better fortune in its  
 place.

Be good to me, Aurora, scorn me less  
 For saying the thing I should not.

Well I know

I should not. I have kept, as others  
 have,  
 The iron rule of womanly reserve  
 In lip and life, till now: I wept a  
 week

Before I came here." Ending, she  
 was pale.

The last words, haughtily said, were  
 tremulous.

This palfrey pranced in harness,  
 arched her neck,

And only by the foam upon the bit  
 You saw she champed against it.

Then I rose.

"I love love: truth's no cleaner thing  
 than love.

I comprehend a love so fiery hot  
 It burns its natural veil of august  
 shame,

And stands sublimely in the nude, as  
 chaste

As Medicean Venus. But I know,  
 A love that burns through veils will  
 burn through masks,

And shrivel up treachery. What, love  
 and lie!

Nay. Go to the opera! Your love's  
 curable."

"I love and lie?" she said, — "I lie,  
 forsooth?"

And beat her taper foot upon the  
 floor,

And smiled against the shoe, —  
 "You're hard, Miss Leigh,

Unversed in current phrases. Bowl-  
 ing-greens

Of poets are fresher than the world's  
 highways.

Forgive me that I rashly blew the  
 dust

Which dims our hedges even, in your  
 eyes,

And vexed you so much. You find,  
 probably,

No evil in this marriage, rather good  
 Of innocence, to pastoralize in song.

You'll give the bond your signature,  
 perhaps,

Beneath the lady's mark, indifferent  
 That Romney chose - a wife could

write her name,  
 In witnessing he loved her."

"Loved!" I cried.

"Who tells you that he wants a wife  
 to love?"

He gets a horse to use, not love, I  
 think:

There's work for wives, as well, —  
 and after, straw,

When men are liberal. For myself,  
 you err

Supposing power in me to break this  
 match.

I could not do it to save Romney's  
 life.

And would not to save mine."

"You take it so,"

She said: "farewell, then. Write  
 your books in peace,

As far as may be for some secret stir  
 Now obvious to me; for, most obvi-  
 ously,

In coming hither I mistook the way."  
 Whereat she touched my hand, and

bent her head,  
 And floated from me like a silent  
 cloud

That leaves the sense of thunder.

I drew breath,

Oppressed in my deliverance. After  
 all,

This woman breaks her social system  
 up

For love, so counted, — the love possi-  
 ble

To such; and lilies are still lilies,  
 pulled

By smutty hands, though spotted  
 from their white;

And thus she is better haply, of her  
 kind,

Than Romney Leigh, who lives by  
 diagrams,

And crosses out the spontaneities  
 Of all his individual, personal life

With formal universals. As if man  
 Were set upon a high stool at a desk

To keep God's books for him in red  
 and black,

And feel by millions! What if even  
 God

Were chiefly God by living out himself  
 To an individualism of the infinite,  
 Eterne, intense, profuse,—still  
 throwing up  
 The golden spray of multitudinous  
 worlds  
 In measure to the proclive weight  
 and rush  
 Of his inner nature,—the spontane-  
 ous love  
 Still proof and outflow of spontane-  
 ous life?  
 Then live, Aurora.

Two hours afterward,  
 Within St. Margaret's Court I stood  
 alone.  
 Close-veiled. A sick child, from an  
 ague-fit,  
 Whose wasted right hand gambolled  
 'gainst his left  
 With an old brass button in a blot of  
 sun,  
 Jeered weakly at me as I passed  
 across  
 The uneven pavement: while a wo-  
 man rouged  
 Upon the angular cheek-bones, ker-  
 chief torn,  
 Thin dangling locks, and flat lascivi-  
 ous mouth,  
 Cursed at a window both ways, in  
 and out,  
 By turns some bed-rid creature and  
 myself,—  
 "Lie still there, mother! liker the  
 dead dog  
 You'll be to-morrow. What, we pick  
 our way,  
 Fine madam, with those damnable  
 small feet!  
 We cover up our face from doing good,  
 As if it were our purse! What  
 brings you here,  
 My lady? is't to find my gentleman  
 Who visits his tame pigeon in the  
 eaves?  
 Our cholera catch you with its cramps  
 and spasms,  
 And tumble up your good clothes,  
 veil and all,  
 And turn your whiteness dead-blue!"  
 I looked up:  
 I think I could have walked through  
 hell that day,  
 And never flinched. "The dear  
 Christ comfort you,"  
 I said, "you must have been most  
 miserable,

To be so cruel;" and I emptied out  
 My purse upon the stones: when, as  
 I had cast  
 The last charm in the caldron, the  
 whole court  
 Went boiling, bubbling up, from all  
 its doors  
 And windows, with a hideous wail of  
 laughs,  
 And roar of oaths, and blows per-  
 haps . . . I passed  
 Too quickly for distinguishing . . .  
 and pushed  
 A little side-door hanging on a hinge,  
 And plunged into the dark, and  
 groped and climbed  
 The long, steep, narrow stair 'twixt  
 broken rail  
 And mildewed wall that let the plas-  
 ter drop  
 To startle me in the blackness. Still,  
 up, up!  
 So high lived Romney's bride. I  
 paused at last  
 Before a low door in the roof, and  
 knocked:  
 There came an answer like a hurried  
 dove,—  
 "So soon? can that be Mister Leigh?  
 so soon?  
 And as I entered an ineffable face  
 Met mine upon the threshold. "Oh,  
 not you,  
 Not you!" The dropping of the  
 voice implied,  
 "Then, if not you, for me not any  
 one."  
 I looked her in the eyes, and held  
 her hands,  
 And said, "I am his cousin, — Rom-  
 ney Leigh's;  
 And here I come to see my cousin  
 too."  
 She touched me with her face and  
 with her voice,  
 This daughter of the people. Such  
 soft flowers,  
 From such rough roots? the people  
 under there,  
 Can sin so, curse so, look so, smell so  
 . . . faugh!  
 Yet have such daughters?  
 Nowise beautiful  
 Was Marian Erle. She was not white  
 nor brown,  
 But could look either, like a mist  
 that changed  
 According to being shone on more or  
 less.





MARIAN ERLE.

1924  
OF THE  
UNIVERSITY  
OF  
CALIFORNIA

The hair, too, ran its opulence of curls  
 In doubt 'twixt dark and bright, nor left you clear  
 To name the color. Too much hair, perhaps,  
 (I'll name a fault here) for so small a head,  
 Which seemed to droop on that side and on this,  
 As a full-blown rose uneasy with its weight,  
 Though not a wind should trouble it. Again,  
 The dimple in the cheek had better gone  
 With redder, fuller rounds; and somewhat large  
 The mouth was, though the milky little teeth  
 Dissolved it to so infantine a smile. For soon it smiled at me; the eyes smiled too,  
 But 'twas as if remembering they had wept,  
 And knowing they should some day weep again.

We talked. She told me all her story out,  
 Which I'll retell with fuller utterance,  
 As colored and confirmed in after-times  
 By others and herself too. Marian Erle  
 Was born upon the ledge of Malvern Hill,  
 To eastward, in a hut built up at night,  
 To evade the landlord's eye, of mud and turf;  
 Still liable, if once he looked that way,  
 To being straight levelled, scattered by his foot,  
 Like any other anthill. Born, I say. God sent her to his world commissioned right,  
 Her human testimonials fully signed;  
 Not scant in soul, complete in lineaments:  
 But others had to swindle her a place  
 To wail in when she had come. No place for her,  
 By man's law! Born an outlaw was this babe:  
 Her first cry in our strange and strangling air,

When cast in spasms out by the shuddering womb,  
 Was wrong against the social code,—forced wrong:  
 What business had the baby to cry there?

I tell her story and grow passionate. She, Marian, did not tell it so, but used  
 Meek words that made no wonder of herself  
 For being so a sad creature. "Mister Leigh  
 Considered truly that such things should change.  
 They *will*, in heaven—but meantime, on the earth,  
 There's none can like a nettle as a pink,  
 Except himself. We're nettles, some of us,  
 And give offence by the act of springing up;  
 And, if we leave the damp side of the wall,  
 The hoes, of course, are on us." So she said.  
 Her father earned his life by random jobs  
 Despised by steadier workmen,—keeping swine  
 On commons, picking hops, or hurrying on  
 The harvest at wet seasons, or, at need,  
 Assisting the Welsh drovers, when a drove  
 Of startled horses plunged into the mist  
 Below the mountain-road, and sowed the wind  
 With wandering neighings. In between the gaps  
 Of such irregular work he drank and slept,  
 And cursed his wife because, the pence being out,  
 She could not buy more drink. At which she turned.  
 (The worm) and beat her baby in revenge  
 For her own broken heart. There's not a crime  
 But takes its proper change out still in crime  
 If once rung on the counter of this world:  
 Let sinners look to it.

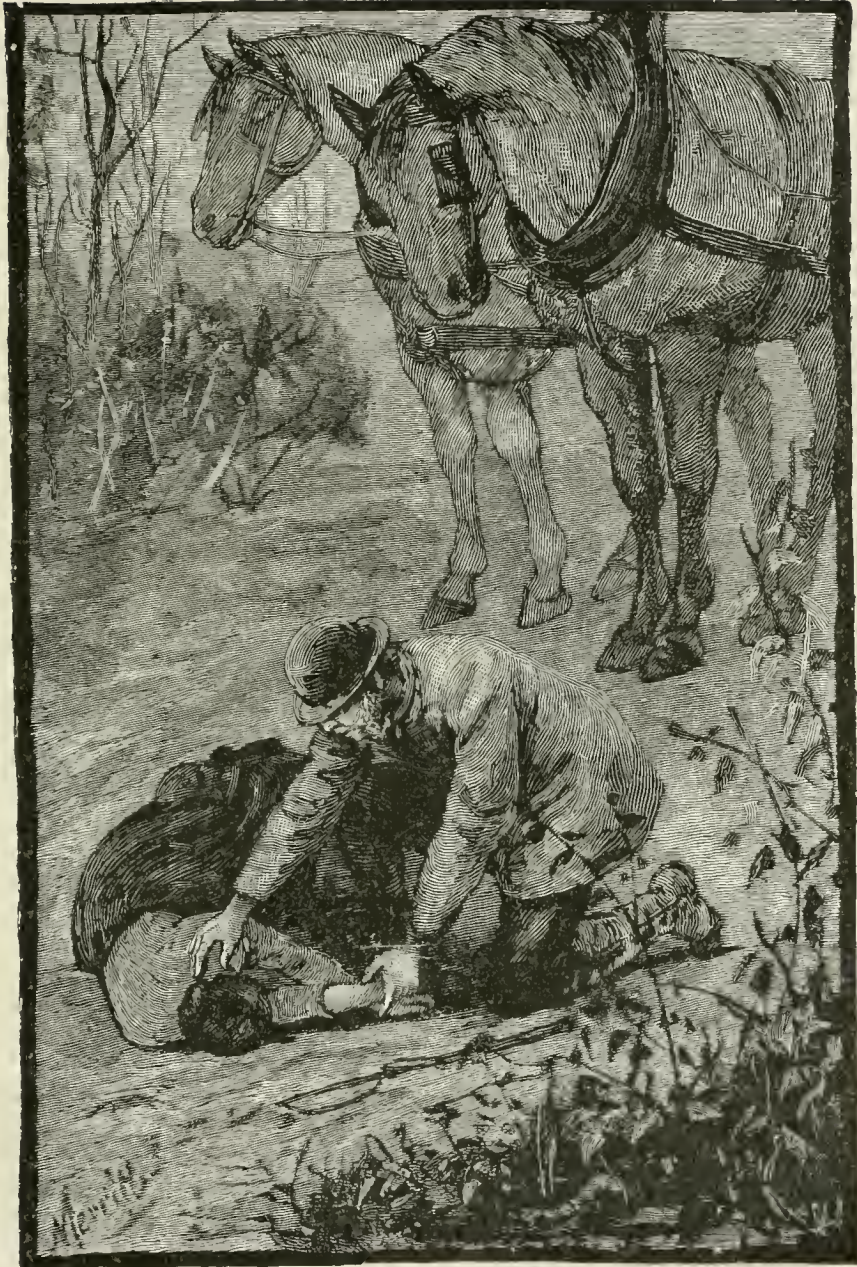
<p>Yet the outcast child,          For whom the very mother's face fore-          went          The mother's special patience, lived          and grew;          Learnt early to cry low, and walk          alone,          With that pathetic, vacillating roll          Of the infant body on the uncertain          feet,          (The earth being felt unstable ground          so soon,)          At which most women's arms unclose          at once          With irrepressive instinct. Thus at          three          This poor weaned kid would run off          from the fold,          This babe would steal off from the          mother's chair,          And, creeping through the golden          walls of gorse,          Would find some keyhole toward the          secrecy          Of heaven's high blue, and, nestling          down, peer out—          Oh, not to catch the angels at their          games,          She had never heard of angels, — but          to gaze          She knew not why, to see she knew          not what,          A-hungering outward from the barren          earth          For something like a joy. She liked,          she said,          To dazzle black her sight against the          sky;          For then, it seemed, some grand blind          Love came down,          And groped her out, and clasped her          with a kiss.          She learnt God that way, and was          beat for it          Whenever she went home, yet came          again,          As surely as the trapped hare, get-          ting free,          Returns to his form. This grand          blind Love, she said,          This skyey father and mother both in          one,          Instructed her and civilized her          more          Than even Sunday school did after-          ward,          To which a lady sent her to learn          books,          And sit upon a long bench in a row</p>	<p>With other children. Well, she          laughed sometimes          To see them laugh and laugh, and          maul their texts;          But oft she was sorrowful with          noise,          And wondered if their mothers beat          them hard          That ever they should laugh so.          There was one          She loved indeed, — Rose Bell, a seven          years' child          So pretty and clever, who read sylla-          bles          When Marian was at letters: <i>she</i>          would laugh          At nothing, hold your finger up, she          laughed,          Then shook her curls down over eyes          and mouth          To hide her make-mirth from the          schoolmaster.          And Rose's pelting glee, as frank as          rain          On cherry-blossoms, brightened Mar-          rian too,          To see another merry whom she loved.          She whispered once (the children side          by side,          With mutual arms intwined about          their necks)          "Your mother lets you laugh so?"          "Ay," said Rose,          "She lets me. She was dug into the          ground          Six years since, I being but a yearling          wean.          Such mothers let us play, and lose our          time,          And never scold nor beat us. Don't          you wish          You had one like that?" There          Marian breaking off          Looked suddenly in my face. "Poor          Rose!" said she:          "I heard her laugh last night in Ox-          ford Street.          I'd pour out half my blood to stop          that laugh.          Poor Rose, poor Rose!" said Marian.          She resumed.          It tried her, when she had learnt at          Sunday school          What God was, what he wanted from          us all,          And how in choosing sin we vexed          the Christ,          To go straight home, and hear her          father pull</p>
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The Name down on us from the thunder-shelf,  
 Then drink away his soul into the dark  
 From seeing judgment. Father, mother, home,  
 Were God and heaven reversed to her: the more  
 She knew of right, the more she guessed their wrong:  
 Her price paid down for knowledge was to know  
 The vileness of her kindred: through her heart,  
 Her filial and tormented heart, henceforth,  
 They struck their blows at virtue. Oh! 'tis hard  
 To learn you have a father up in heaven  
 By a gathering certain sense of being, on earth,  
 Still worse than orphaned: 'tis too heavy a grief  
 The having to thank God for such a joy.

And so passed Marian's life from year to year.  
 Her parents took her with them when they tramped,  
 Dodged lanes and heaths, frequented towns and fairs,  
 And once went farther, and saw Manchester,  
 And once the sea, — that blue end of the world,  
 That fair scroll-finis of a wicked book, —  
 And twice a prison, back at intervals,  
 Returning to the hills. Hills draw like heaven,  
 And stronger sometimes, holding out their hands  
 To pull you from the vile flats up to them.  
 And though, perhaps, these strollers still strolled back,  
 As sheep do, simply that they knew the way,  
 They certainly felt bettered unaware,  
 Emerging from the social smut of towns,  
 To wipe their feet clean on the mountain turf.  
 In which long wanderings Marian lived and learned,

Endured and learned. The people on the roads  
 Would stop, and ask her why her eyes outgrew  
 Her cheeks, and if she meant to lodge the birds  
 In all that hair; and then they lifted her, —  
 The miller in his cart a mile or twain,  
 The butcher's boy on horseback. Often, too,  
 The peddler stopped, and tapped her on the head  
 With absolute forefinger, brown and ringed,  
 And asked, if peradventure she could read;  
 And when she answered, "Ay," would toss her down  
 Some stray odd volume from his heavy pack, —  
 A "Thomson's Seasons," mulcted of the spring,  
 Or half a play of Shakspeare's, torn across,  
 (She had to guess the bottom of a page  
 By just the top, sometimes; as difficult  
 As, sitting on the moon, to guess the earth!)  
 Or else a sheaf of leaves (for that small Ruth's  
 Small gleanings) torn out from the heart of books,  
 From Churchyard Elegies and Edens Lost,  
 From Burns, and Bunyan, Selkirk, and Tom Jones.  
 'Twas somewhat hard to keep the things distinct;  
 And oft the jangling influence jarred the child,  
 Like looking at a sunset full of grace  
 Through a pothouse window, while the drunken oaths  
 Went on behind her. But she weeded out  
 Her book-leaves, threw away the leaves that hurt,  
 (First tore them small, that none should find a word)  
 And made a nosegay of the sweet and good  
 To fold within her breast, and pore upon  
 At broken moments of the noontide glare,  
 When leave was given her to untie her cloak,

<p>And rest upon the dusty highway's bank From the road's dust: or oft, the journey done, Some city friend would lead her by the hand To hear a lecture at an institute. And thus she had grown, this Marian Erle of ours, To no book-learning. She was ignorant Of authors: not in earshot of the things Outspoken o'er the heads of common men By men who are uncommon, but within The cadenced hum of such, and capable Of catching from the fringes of the wing Some fragmentary phrases here and there Of that fine music, which, being carried in To her soul, had reproduced itself afresh In finer motions of the lips and lids. She said, in speaking of it, "If a flower Were thrown you out of heaven at intervals, You'd soon attain to a trick of looking up" And so with her. She counted me her years, Till I felt old: and then she counted me Her sorrowful pleasures, till I felt ashamed. She told me she was fortunate and calm On such and such a season, sate and sewed, With no one to break up her crystal thoughts, While rhymes from lovely poems span around Their ringing circles of ecstatic tune, Beneath the moistened finger of the hour. Her parents called her a strange, sickly child, Not good for much, and given to sulk and stare, And smile into the hedges and the clouds, And tremble if one shook her from her fit</p>	<p>By any blow, or word even. Outdoor jobs Went ill with her, and household quiet work She was not born to. Had they kept the north, They might have had their penny- worth out of her, Like other parents, in the factories, (Your children work for you, not you for them, Or else they better had been choked with air The first breath drawn;) but, in this tramping life, Was nothing to be done with such a child But tramp and tramp. And yet she knitted hose Not ill, and was not dull at needle- work; And all the country people gave her pence For darning stockings past their natu- ral age, And patching petticoats from old to new, And other light work done for thrifty wives. One day, said Marian, — the sun shone that day, — Her mother had been badly beat, and felt The bruises sore about her wretched soul, (That must have been): she came in suddenly, And snatching in a sort of breathless rage Her daughter's headgear comb, let down the hair Upon her like a sudden waterfall, Then drew her drenched and passive by the arm Outside the hut they lived in. When the child Could clear her blinded face from all that stream Of tresses . . . there a man stood, with beast's eyes, That seemed as they would swallow her alive, Complete in body and spirit, hair and all, And burning stertorous breath that hurt her cheek, He breathed so near. The mother held her tight,</p>
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"A wagoner had found her in a ditch." — Page 57.

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Saying hard between her teeth, "Why,  
 wench, why, wench,  
 The squire speaks to you now! the  
 squire's too good:  
 He means to set you up, and comfort  
 us.  
 Be mannerly at least." The child  
 turned round  
 And looked up piteous in the mother's  
 face,  
 (Be sure that mother's death-bed will  
 not want  
 Another devil to damn, than such a  
 look)  
 "O mother!" Then, with desperate  
 glance to heaven,  
 "God, free me from my mother!"  
 she shrieked out,  
 "These mothers are too dreadful."  
 And, with force  
 As passionate as fear, she tore her  
 hands,  
 Like lilies from the rocks, from hers  
 and his,  
 And sprang down, bounded headlong  
 down the steep,  
 Away from both — away, if possible,  
 As far as God, — away! They yelled  
 at her,  
 As famished hounds at a hare. She  
 heard them yell;  
 She felt her name hiss after her from  
 the hills,  
 Like shot from guns. On, on. And  
 now she had cast  
 The voices off with the uplands. On.  
 Mad fear  
 Was running in her feet, and killing  
 the ground;  
 The white roads curled as if she  
 burnt them up;  
 The green fields melted; wayside  
 trees fell back  
 To make room for her. Then her  
 head grew vexed;  
 Trees, fields, turned on her and ran  
 after her;  
 She heard the quick pants of the hills  
 behind,  
 Their keen air pricked her neck: she  
 had lost her feet,  
 Could run no more, yet somehow  
 went as fast,  
 The horizon red 'twixt steeples in the  
 east  
 So sucked her forward, forward,  
 while her heart  
 Kept swelling, swelling, till it swelled  
 so big

It seemed to fill her body, when it  
 burst,  
 And overflowed the world, and  
 swamped the light:  
 "And now I am dead and safe,"  
 thought Marian Erle.  
 She had dropped, she had fainted.  
 As the sense returned,  
 The night had passed, — not life's  
 night. She was 'ware  
 Of heavy tumbling motions, creaking  
 wheels,  
 The driver shouting to the lazy team  
 That swung their rankling bells  
 against her brain,  
 While through the wagon's cover-  
 ture and chinks  
 The cruel yellow morning pecked at  
 her,  
 Alive or dead upon the straw inside;  
 At which her soul ached back into  
 the dark  
 And prayed, "No more of that." A  
 wagoner  
 Had found her in a ditch beneath the  
 moon,  
 As white as moonshine, save for the  
 oozing blood.  
 At first he thought her dead; but  
 when he had wiped  
 The mouth, and heard it sigh, he  
 raised her up,  
 And laid her in his wagon in the  
 straw,  
 And so conveyed her to the distant  
 town  
 To which his business called himself,  
 and left  
 That heap of misery at the hospital.  
 She stirred; the place seemed new  
 and strange as death.  
 The white strait bed, with others  
 strait and white,  
 Like graves dug side by side at meas-  
 ured lengths,  
 And quiet people walking in and out  
 With wonderful low voices and soft  
 steps,  
 And apparitional equal care for each,  
 Astonished her with order, silence,  
 law;  
 And when a gentle hand held out a  
 cup,  
 She took it, as you do at sacrament,  
 Half awed, half melted, not being  
 used, indeed,  
 To so much love as makes the form  
 of love

And courtesy of manners. Delicate  
drinks,  
And rare white bread, to which some  
dying eyes  
Were turned in observation. O my  
God,  
How sick we must be ere we make  
men just!  
I think it frets the saints in heaven  
to see  
How many desolate creatures on the  
earth  
Have learnt the simple dues of fel-  
lowship  
And social comfort, in a hospital,  
As Marian did. She lay there,  
stunned, half tranced,  
And wished, at intervals of growing  
sense,  
She might be sicker yet, if sickness  
made  
The world so marvellous kind, the  
air so lushed,  
And all her wake-time quiet as a  
sleep;  
For now she understood (as such  
things were)  
How sickness ended very oft in heav-  
en  
Among the unspoken raptures — yet  
more sick,  
And surelier happy. Then she  
dropped her lids,  
And, folding up her hands as flowers  
at night,  
Would lose no moment of the blessed  
time.

She lay and seethed in fever many  
weeks.  
But youth was strong, and overcame  
the test:  
Revolted soul and flesh were recon-  
ciled,  
And fetched back to the necessary  
day  
And daylight duties. She could creep  
about  
The long bare rooms, and stare out  
drearily  
From any narrow window on the  
street,  
Till some one who had nursed her as  
a friend  
Said coldly to her, as an enemy,  
“She had leave to go next week,  
being well enough,”  
(While only her heart ached.) “Go  
next week,” thought she,

“Next week! how would it be with  
her next week,  
Let out into that terrible street alone  
Among the pushing people . . . to go  
. . . where?”

One day, the last before the dreaded  
last,  
Among the convalescents, like herself  
Prepared to go next morning, she  
sate dumb,  
And heard half absently the women  
talk, —  
How one was famished for her baby’s  
cheeks,  
“The little wretch would know her!  
a year old  
And lively, like his father;” one was  
keen  
To get to work, and fill some clamor-  
ous mouths;  
And one was tender for her dear  
goodman  
Who had missed her sorely; and one,  
querulous . . .  
“Would pay backbiting neighbors  
who had dared  
To talk about her as already dead;”  
And one was proud . . . “and if her  
sweetheart Luke  
Had left her for a ruddier face than  
hers,  
(The gossip would be seen through at  
a glance)  
Sweet riddance of such sweethearts  
— let him hang!  
’Twere good to have been sick for  
such an end.”

And while they talked, and Marian  
felt the worse  
For having missed the worst of all  
their wrongs.  
A visitor was ushered through the  
wards  
And paused among the talkers.  
“When he looked  
It was as if he spoke, and when he  
spoke  
He sang perhaps,” said Marian;  
“could she tell?  
She only knew” (so much she had  
chronicled,  
As seraphs might the making of the  
sun)  
“That he who came and spake was  
Romney Leigh,  
And then and there she saw and heard  
him first.”

And when it was her turn to have the  
face  
Upon her, all those buzzing pallid  
lips  
Being satisfied with comfort — when  
he changed  
To Marian, saying, "And *you?* you're  
going, where?"  
She, moveless as a worm beneath a  
stone  
Which some one's stumbling foot has  
spurned aside,  
Writhed suddenly, astonished with  
the light,  
And breaking into sobs cried, "Where  
I go?  
None asked me till this moment.  
Can I say  
Where *I* go, when it has not seemed  
worth while  
To God himself, who thinks of every  
one,  
To think of me, and fix where I shall  
go?"

"So young," he gently asked her,  
"you have lost  
Your father and your mother?"  
"Both," she said,  
"Both lost! My father was burnt up  
with gin  
Or ever I sucked milk, and so is lost.  
My mother sold me to a man last  
month,  
And so my mother's lost, 'tis mani-  
fest.  
And I, who fled from her for miles  
and miles,  
As if I had caught sight of the fire of  
hell  
Through some wild gap, (she was my  
mother, sir)  
It seems I shall be lost too presently:  
And so we end, all three of us."  
"Poor child!"  
He said, with such a pity in his  
voice,  
It soothed her more than her own  
tears, — "poor child!  
'Tis simple that betrayal by mother's  
love  
Should bring despair of God's too.  
Yet be taught,  
He's better to us than many mothers  
are,  
And children cannot wander beyond  
reach  
Of the sweep of his white raiment.  
Touch and hold!

And, if you weep still, weep where  
John was laid  
While Jesus loved him."  
"She could say the words,"  
She told me, "exactly as he uttered  
them  
A year back, since in any doubt or  
dark  
They came out like the stars, and  
shone on her  
With just their comfort. Common  
words, perhaps  
The ministers in church might say  
the same;  
But *he*, he made the church with what  
he spoke:  
The difference was the miracle," said  
she.

Then catching up her smile to ravis-  
ment,  
She added quickly, "I repeat his  
words,  
But not his tones: can any one re-  
peat  
The music of an organ out of church?  
And when he said, 'Poor child!' I  
shut my eyes  
To feel how tenderly his voice broke  
through,  
As the ointment-box broke on the  
Holy feet  
To let out the rich medicative nard."

She told me how he had raised and  
rescued her  
With reverent pity, as in touching  
grief  
He touched the wounds of Christ,  
and made her feel  
More self-respecting. Hope he called  
belief  
In God; work, worship: therefore let  
us pray.  
And thus, to snatch her soul from  
atheism,  
And keep it stainless from her moth-  
er's face,  
He sent her to a famous seamstress-  
house  
Far off in London, there to work and  
hope.

With that they parted. She kept  
sight of heaven,  
But not of Romney. He had good  
to do  
To others. Through the days and  
through the nights

She sewed and sewed and sewed.  
 She drooped sometimes,  
 And wondered, while along the tawny  
 light  
 She struck the new thread into her  
 needle's eye,  
 How people without mothers on the  
 hills  
 Could choose the town to live in; then  
 she drew  
 The stitch, and mused how Romney's  
 face would look,  
 And if 'twere likely he'd remember  
 hers  
 When they two had their meeting  
 after death.

#### BOOK FOURTH.

THEY met still sooner. 'Twas a year  
 from thence  
 That Lucy Gresham — the sick seam-  
 stress girl,  
 Who sewed by Marian's chair so still  
 and quick,  
 And leant her head upon its back to  
 cough  
 More freely, when, the mistress turn-  
 ing round,  
 The others took occasion to laugh out—  
 Gave up at last. Among the workers  
 spoke  
 A bold girl with black eyebrows and  
 red lips:  
 "You know the news? Who's dying,  
 do you think?  
 Our Lucy Gresham. I expected it  
 As little as Nell Hart's wedding. —  
 Blush not, Nell,  
 Thy curls be red enough without thy  
 cheeks,  
 And some day there'll be found a  
 man to dote  
 On red curls. Lucy Gresham swooned  
 last night,  
 Dropped sudden in the street while  
 going home;  
 And now the baker says, who took  
 her up  
 And laid her by her grandmother in  
 bed,  
 He'll give her a week to die in. Pass  
 the silk.  
 Let's hope he gave her a loaf too,  
 within reach:

For otherwise they'll starve before  
 they die,  
 That funny pair of bedfellows! — Miss  
 Bell,  
 I'll thank you for the scissors. The  
 old crone  
 Is paralytic; that's the reason why  
 Our Lucy's thread went faster than  
 her breath,  
 Which went too quick, we all know.  
 — Marian Erle!  
 Why, Marian Erle, you're not the fool  
 to cry?  
 Your tears spoil Lady Waldemar's  
 new dress,  
 You piece of pity!"

Marian rose up straight,  
 And, breaking through the talk and  
 through the work,  
 Went outward, in the face of their  
 surprise,  
 To Lucy's home, to nurse her back to  
 life  
 Or down to death. She knew, by  
 such an act,  
 All place and grace were forfeit in  
 the house,  
 Whose mistress would supply the  
 missing hand  
 With necessary not inhuman haste,  
 And take no blame. But pity, too,  
 had dues.  
 She could not leave a solitary soul  
 To founder in the dark, while she sate  
 still  
 And lavished stitches on a lady's  
 hem,  
 As if no other work were paramount.  
 "Why, God," thought Marian, "has  
 a missing hand  
 This moment: Lucy wants a drink,  
 perhaps.  
 Let others miss me! never miss me,  
 God!"

So Marian sate by Lucy's bed, con-  
 tent  
 With duty, and was strong, for recom-  
 pense,  
 To hold the lamp of human love arm-  
 high,  
 To catch the death-strained eyes, and  
 comfort them,  
 Until the angels, on the luminous  
 side  
 Of death, had got theirs ready. And  
 she said,  
 If Lucy thanked her sometimes, called  
 her kind,

It touched her strangely. "Marian Erle, called kind!  
 What Marian, beaten and sold, who could not die!  
 'Tis verily good fortune to be kind.  
 Ah, you!" she said, "who are born to such a grace,  
 Be sorry for the unlicensed class, the poor,  
 Reduced to think the best good fortune means  
 That others simply should be kind to them."

From sleep to sleep when Lucy had slid away  
 So gently, like the light upon a hill,  
 Of which none names the moment that it goes  
 Though all see when 'tis gone, a man came in  
 And stood beside the bed. The old idiot wretch  
 Screamed feebly, like a baby overlain,  
 "Sir, sir, you won't mistake me for the corpse?  
 Don't look at *me*, sir! never bury *me*!  
 Although I lie here, I'm alive as you,  
 Except my legs and arms,—I eat and drink  
 And understand,—(that you're the gentleman  
 Who fits the funerals up, Heaven speed you, sir,  
 And certainly I should be livelier still  
 If Lucy here . . . sir, Lucy is the corpse . . .  
 Had worked more properly to buy me wine;  
 But Lucy, sir, was always slow at work.  
 I sha'n't lose much by Lucy.—Marian Erle,  
 Speak up, and show the gentleman the corpse."

And then a voice said, "Marian Erle."  
 She rose;  
 It was the hour for angels—there stood hers!  
 She scarcely marvelled to see Romney Leigh.  
 As light November snows to empty nests,  
 As grass to graves, as moss to mildewed stones,

As July suns to ruins, through the rents,  
 As ministering spirits to mourners, through a loss,  
 As Heaven itself to men, through pangs of death,  
 He came uncalled wherever grief had come.  
 "And so," said Marian Erle, "we met anew,"  
 And added softly, "so, we shall not part."

He was not angry that she had left the house  
 Wherein he placed her. Well, she had feared it might  
 Have vexed him. Also, when he found her set  
 On keeping, though the dead was out of sight,  
 That half-dead, half-live body left behind  
 With cankerous heart and flesh, which took your best,  
 And cursed you for the little good it did,  
 (Could any leave the bedrid wretch alone.  
 So joyless she was thankless even to God,  
 Much more to you?) he did not say 'twas well,  
 Yet Marian thought he did not take it ill,  
 Since day by day he came, and every day  
 She felt within his utterance and his eyes  
 A closer, tenderer presence of the soul,  
 Until at last he said, "We shall not part."

On that same day was Marian's work complete:  
 She had smoothed the empty bed, and swept the floor  
 Of coffin sawdust, set the chairs anew  
 The dead had ended gossip in, and stood  
 In that poor room so cold and orderly,  
 The door-key in her hand, prepared to go  
 As *they* had, howbeit not their way.  
 He spoke.

"Dear Marian, of one clay God made us all;

And though men push and poke and  
 paddle in't,  
 (As children play at fashioning dirt-  
 pies)  
 And call their fancies by the name of  
 facts,  
 Assuming difference, lordship, privi-  
 lege,  
 When all's plain dirt, they come back  
 to it at last:  
 The first grave-digger proves it with  
 a spade,  
 And pats all even. Need we wait for  
 this,  
 You Marian, and I Romney?"

She, at that,  
 Looked blindly in his face, as when  
 one looks  
 Through driving autumn-rains to find  
 the sky.  
 He went on speaking:  
 "Marian, I being born  
 What men call noble, and you issued  
 from  
 The noble people, though the tyran-  
 nous sword  
 Which pierced Christ's heart has cleft  
 the world in twain  
 'Twixt class and class, opposing rich  
 to poor,  
 Shall *we* parted? Not so. Let  
 us lean  
 And strain together rather, each to  
 each,  
 Compress the red lips of this gaping  
 wound  
 As far as two souls can, ay, lean and  
 league, —  
 I from my superabundance, from your  
 want  
 You, — joining in a protest 'gainst the  
 wrong  
 On both sides."  
 All the rest he held her hand  
 In speaking, which confused the sense  
 of much.  
 Her heart against his words beat out  
 so thick,  
 They might as well be written on the  
 dust  
 Where some poor bird, escaping from  
 hawk's beak,  
 Has dropped, and beats its shudder-  
 ing wings, the lines  
 Are rubbed so; yet 'twas something  
 like to this:  
 "That they two, standing at the two  
 extremes  
 Of social classes, had received one seal,  
 Been dedicate and drawn beyond  
 themselves  
 To mercy and ministration, — he, in-  
 deed,  
 Through what he knew, and she,  
 through what she felt;  
 He, by man's conscience, she, by wo-  
 man's heart,  
 Relinquishing their several 'vantage  
 posts  
 Of wealthy ease and honorable toil,  
 To work with God at love. And since  
 God willed,  
 That, putting out his hand to touch  
 this ark,  
 He found a woman's hand there, he'd  
 accept  
 The sign too, hold the tender fingers  
 fast,  
 And say, 'My fellow-worker, be my  
 wife!'"

She told the tale with simple, rustic  
 turns,  
 Strong leaps of meaning in her sud-  
 den eyes  
 That took the gaps of any imperfect  
 phrase  
 Of the unschooled speaker: I have  
 rather writ  
 The thing I understood so than the  
 thing  
 I heard so. And I cannot render  
 right  
 Her quick gesticulation, wild yet  
 soft,  
 Self-startled from the habitual mood  
 she used,  
 Half sad, half languid, — like dumb  
 creatures (now  
 A rustling bird, and now a wandering  
 deer,  
 Or squirrel 'gainst the oak-gloom flash-  
 ing up  
 His sidelong, burnished head, in just  
 her way  
 Of savage spontaneity,) that stir  
 Abruptly the green silence of the  
 woods,  
 And make it stranger, holier, more  
 profound;  
 As Nature's general heart confessed  
 itself  
 Of life, and then fell backward on  
 repose.  
 I kissed the lips that ended. "So,  
 indeed,  
 He loves you, Marian?"

“Loves me!” She looked up  
 With a child’s wonder when you ask  
 him first  
 Who made the sun, — a puzzled blush,  
 that grew,  
 Then broke off in a rapid, radiant  
 smile  
 Of sure solution. “Loves me! He  
 loves all,  
 And me, of course. He had not  
 asked me else  
 To work with him forever, and be his  
 wife.”

Her words reproved me. This, per-  
 haps, was love, —  
 To have its hands too full of gifts to  
 give,  
 For putting out a hand to take a gift;  
 To love so much, the perfect round of  
 love  
 Includes in strict conclusion being  
 loved;  
 As Eden-dew went up, and fell again,  
 Enough for watering Eden. Obvi-  
 ously  
 She had not thought about his love at  
 all.  
 The cataracts of her soul had poured  
 themselves,  
 And risen self-crowned in rainbow:  
 would she ask  
 Who crowned her? It sufficed that  
 she was crowned.  
 With women of my class ’tis other-  
 wise:  
 We haggle for the small change of  
 our gold,  
 And so much love accord for so much  
 love,  
 Rialto-prices. Are we therefore  
 wrong?  
 If marriage be a contract, look to it  
 then,  
 Contracting parties should be equal,  
 just;  
 But if, a simple fealty on one side,  
 A mere religion, right to give, is  
 all,  
 And certain brides of Europe duly  
 ask  
 To mount the pile as Indian widows  
 do,  
 The spices of their tender youth  
 heaped up,  
 The jewels of their gracious virtues  
 worn,  
 More gems, more glory, to consume  
 entire

For a living husband: as the man’s  
 alive,  
 Not dead, the woman’s duty by so  
 much  
 Advanced in England beyond Hindo-  
 stan.

I sate there musing, till she touched  
 my hand  
 With hers, as softly as a strange white  
 bird  
 She feared to startle in touching.  
 “You are kind.

But are you, peradventure, vexed at  
 heart

Because your cousin takes me for a  
 wife?

I know I am not worthy — nay, in  
 truth,

I’m glad on’t, since, for that, he  
 chooses me.

He likes the poor things of the world  
 the best;

I would not, therefore, if I could, be  
 rich.

It pleasures him to stoop for butter-  
 cups.

I would not be a rose upon the wall  
 A queen might stop at, near the pal-  
 ace-door,

To say to a courtier, ‘Pluck that rose  
 for me:

It’s prettier than the rest.’ O Rom-  
 ney Leigh!

I’d rather far be trodden by his foot  
 Than lie in a great queen’s bosom.”

Out of breath,

She paused.

“Sweet Marian, do you disavow  
 The roses with that face?”

She dropt her head  
 As if the wind had caught that flower  
 of her

And bent it in the garden, then  
 looked up

With grave assurance. “Well, you  
 think me bold;

But so we all are, when we’re pray-  
 ing God.

And if I’m bold, yet, lady, credit me,  
 That since I know myself for what I  
 am, —

Much fitter for his handmaid than his  
 wife, —

I’ll prove the handmaid and the wife  
 at once,

Serve tenderly, and love obediently,  
 And be a worthier mate, perhaps,  
 than some

Who are wooed in silk among their  
learned books;  
While I shall set myself to read his  
eyes,  
Till such grow plainer to me than the  
French  
To wisest ladies. Do you think I'll  
miss  
A letter in the spelling of his mind?  
No more than they do when they sit  
and write  
Their flying words with flickering  
wild-fowl tails,  
Nor ever pause to find how many  
ts,  
Should that be *y* or *i*, they know't so  
well:  
I've seen them writing, when I  
brought a dress  
And waited, floating out their soft  
white hands  
On shining paper. But they're hard  
sometimes,  
For all those hands. We've used out  
many nights,  
And worn the yellow daylight into  
shreds  
Which flapped and shivered down our  
aching eyes  
Till night appeared more tolerable,  
just  
That pretty ladies might look beau-  
tiful,  
Who said at last . . . 'You're lazy  
in that house!  
You're slow in sending home the  
work: I count  
I've waited near an hour for't.' Par-  
don me,  
I do not blame them, madam, nor  
misprise:  
They are fair and gracious; ay, but  
not like you,  
Since none but you has Mister Leigh's  
own blood,  
Both noble and gentle,—and with-  
out it . . . well,  
They are fair, I said; so fair, it scarce  
seems strange  
That, flashing out in any looking-  
glass  
The wonder of their glorious brows  
and breasts,  
They're charmed so, they forget to  
look behind,  
And mark how pale we've grown, we  
pitiful  
Remainders of the world. And so  
perhaps

If Mister Leigh had chosen a wife  
from these,  
She might, although he's better than  
her best,  
And dearly she would know it, steal  
a thought  
Which should be all his, an eye-glance  
from his face,  
To plunge into the mirror opposite  
In search of her own beauty's pearl:  
while I . . .  
Ah, dearest lady, serge will outweigh  
silk  
For winter-wear, when hodies feel  
a-cold,  
And I'll be a true wife to your cousin  
Leigh."

Before I answered, he was there him-  
self.  
I think he had been standing in the  
room,  
And listened probably to half her  
talk,  
Arrested, turned to stone,—as white  
as stone.  
Will tender sayings make men look  
so white?  
He loves her then profoundly.  
"You are here,  
Aurora? Here I meet you!" We  
clasped hands.

"Even so, dear Romney. Lady Wal-  
demar  
Has sent me in haste to find a cousin  
of mine  
Who shall be."  
"Lady Waldemar is good."

"Here's one, at least, who is good,"  
I sighed, and touched  
Poor Marian's happy head, as dog-  
like she,  
Most passionately patient, waited on,  
A-tremble for her turn of greeting  
words;  
"I've sate a full hour with your Mar-  
ian Erle,  
And learnt the thing by heart, and  
from my heart  
Am therefore competent to give you  
thanks  
For such a cousin."

"You accept at last  
A gift from me, Aurora, without  
scorn?  
At last I please you?" How his  
voice was changed!



<p>" You cannot please a woman against her will,  And once you vexed me. Shall we speak of that?  We'll say, then, you were noble in it all,  And I not ignorant — let it pass!  And now  You please me, Romney, when you please yourself:  So, please you, be fanatical in love,  And I'm well pleased. Ah, cousin!  at the old hall,  Among the gallery portraits of our Leighs,  We shall not find a sweeter signory  Than this pure forehead's."  <p style="text-align: right;">Not a word he said.</p> How arrogant men are! Even philanthropists —  Who try to take a wife up in the way  They put down a subscription-check,  if once  She turns, and says, "I will not tax  you so,  Most charitable sir" — feel ill at ease,  As though she had wronged them somehow. I suppose  We women should remember what we are,  And not throw back an obolus inscribed  With Cæsar's image lightly. I resumed.</p> <p>" It strikes me, some of those sublime Vandykes  Were not too proud to make good saints in heaven;  And, if so, then they're not too proud to-day,  To bow down (now the ruffs are off their necks)  And own this good, true, noble Marian, yours,  And mine I'll say! For poets. (bear the word),  Half-poets even, are still whole democrats, —  Oh, not that we're disloyal to the high,  But loyal to the low, and cognizant  Of the less scrutable majesties. For me,  I comprehend your choice, I justify  Your right in choosing."  <p style="text-align: right;">"No, no, no!" he sighed,  With a sort of melancholy impatient scorn,</p> </p>	<p>As some grown man who never had a child  Puts by some child who plays at being a man,  " You did not, do not, can not comprehend  My choice, my ends, my motives, nor myself:  No matter now — we'll let it pass, you say.  I thank you for your generous cousinship  Which helps this present: I accept for her  Your favorable thoughts. We're fallen on days,  We two who are not poets, when to wed  Requires less mutual love than common love  For two together to bear out at once  Upon the loveless many. Work in pairs,  In galley-couplings or in marriage-rings,  The difference lies in the honor, not the work, —  And such we're bound to, I and she.  But love,  (You poets are benighted in this age,  The hour's too late for catching even moths,  You've gnats instead,) love! — love's fool-paradise  Is out of date, like Adam's. Set a swan  To swim the Trenton rather than true love  To float its fabulous plumage safely down  The cataracts of this loud transition-time,  Whose roar forever henceforth in my ears  Must keep me deaf to music."  <p style="text-align: right;">There, I turned</p> And kissed poor Marian, out of discontent.  The man had baffled, chafed me, till I flung  For refuge to the woman, as sometimes,  Impatient of some crowded room's close smell,  You throw a window open, and lean out  To breathe a long breath in the dewy night,</p>
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And cool your angry forehead. She,  
 at least,  
 Was not built up as walls are, brick  
 by brick,  
 Each fancy squared, each feeling  
 ranged by line,  
 The very heat of burning youth ap-  
 plied  
 To indurate form and system! excel-  
 lent bricks,  
 A well-built wall, which stops you  
 on the road,  
 And into which you cannot see an  
 inch  
 Although you beat your head against  
 it — pshaw!

“Adieu,” I said, “for this time, cous-  
 ins both,  
 And cousin Romney, pardon me the  
 word,  
 Be happy, — oh! in some esoteric  
 sense  
 Of course, — I mean no harm in wish-  
 ing well.  
 Adieu, my Marian. May she come  
 to me,  
 Dear Romney, and be married from  
 my house?  
 It is not part of your philosophy  
 To keep your bird upon the black-  
 thorn?”

“Ay,  
 He answered; “but it is. I take my  
 wife  
 Directly from the people; and she  
 comes,  
 As Austria’s daughter to imperial  
 France,  
 Betwixt her eagles, blinking not her  
 race,  
 From Margaret’s Court at garret-  
 height, to meet  
 And wed me at St. James’s, nor put  
 off  
 Her gown of serge for that. The  
 things we do,  
 We do: we’ll wear no mask, as if we  
 blushed.”

“Dear Romney, you’re the poet,” I  
 replied,  
 But felt my smile too mournful for  
 my word,  
 And turned and went. Ay, masks, I  
 thought, — beware  
 Of tragic masks we tie before the  
 glass,  
 Uplifted on the cothurn half a yard

Above the natural stature! we would  
 play  
 Heroic parts to ourselves, and end,  
 perhaps,  
 As impotently as Athenian wives  
 Who shrieked in fits at the Eumeni-  
 des.

His foot pursued me down the stair.  
 “At least  
 You’ll suffer me to walk with you  
 beyond  
 These hideous streets, these graves,  
 where men alive,  
 Packed close with earthworms, burr  
 unconsciously  
 About the plague that slew them: let  
 me go.  
 The very women pelt their souls in  
 mud  
 At any woman who walks here alone.  
 How came you here alone? — you are  
 ignorant.”

We had a strange and melancholy  
 walk:  
 The night came drizzling downward  
 in dark rain,  
 And as we walked, the color of the  
 time,  
 The act, the presence, my hand upon  
 his arm,  
 His voice in my ear, and mine to my  
 own sense,  
 Appeared unnatural. We talked  
 modern books  
 And daily papers, Spanish marriage-  
 schemes  
 And English climate — was’t so cold  
 last year?  
 And will the wind change by to-mor-  
 row morn?  
 Can Guizot stand? is London full?  
 is trade  
 Competitive? has Dickens turned his  
 hinge  
 A-pinch upon the fingers of the great?  
 And are potatoes to grow mythical  
 Like moly? will the apple die out too?  
 Which way is the wind to-night?  
 south-east? due east?  
 We talked on fast, while every com-  
 mon word  
 Seemed tangled with the thunder at  
 one end,  
 And ready to pull down upon our  
 heads  
 A terror out of sight. And yet to  
 pause

Were surelier mortal: we tore greedily up  
All silence, all the innocent breathing-points,  
As if, like pale conspirators in haste,  
We tore up papers where our signatures  
Imperilled us to an ugly shame or death.

I cannot tell you why it was. 'Tis plain  
We had not loved nor hated: wherefore dread  
To spill gunpowder on ground safe from fire?  
Perhaps we had lived too closely to diverge  
So absolutely: leave two clocks, they say,  
Wound up to different hours, upon one shelf,  
And slowly, through the interior wheels of each,  
The blind mechanic motion sets itself  
A-throb to feel out for the mutual time.  
It was not so with us, indeed: while he  
Struck midnight, I kept striking six at dawn;  
While he marked judgment, I, redemption-day:  
And such exception to a general law  
Imperious upon inert matter even,  
Might make us, each to either, insecure,  
A beckoning mystery, or a troubling fear.

I mind me, when we parted at the door,  
How strange his good-night sounded,  
— like good-night  
Beside a deathbed, where the morrow's sun  
Is sure to come too late for more good days.  
And all that night I thought . . .  
"Good-night," said he.

And so a month passed. Let me set it down  
At once, — I have been wrong, I have been wrong,  
We are wrong always when we think too much  
Of what we think or are: albeit our thoughts

Be verily bitter as self-sacrifice,  
We're no less selfish. If we sleep on rocks  
Or roses, sleeping past the hour of noon,  
We're lazy. This I write against myself.

I had done a duty in the visit paid  
To Marian, and was ready otherwise  
To give the witness of my presence and name  
Whenever she should marry. Which, I thought,  
Sufficed. I even had cast into the scale  
An overweight of justice toward the match.  
The Lady Waldemar had missed her tool,  
And broken it in the lock as being too straight  
For a crooked purpose; while poor Marian Erle  
Missed nothing in my accents or my acts:  
I had not been ungenerous on the whole,  
Nor yet untender: so enough. I felt  
Tired, overworked: this marriage somewhat jarred;  
Or, if it did not, all the bridal noise,  
The pricking of the map of life with pins,  
In schemes of . . . "Here we'll go,"  
and "There we'll stay,"  
And "Everywhere we'll prosper in our love,"  
Was scarce my business: let them order it:  
Who else should care? I threw myself aside,  
As one who had done her work, and shuts her eyes  
To rest the better.  
I, who should have known,  
Forereckoned mischief! Where we disavow  
Being keeper to our brother, we're his Cain.

I might have held that poor child to my heart  
A little longer! 'twould have hurt me much  
To have hastened by its beats the marriage-day,  
And kept her safe meantime from tampering hands,

Or, peradventure, traps. What drew  
me back  
From telling Romney plainly the de-  
signs  
Of Lady Waldemar, as spoken out  
To me . . . me? had I any right, ay,  
right,  
With womanly compassion and re-  
serve  
To break the fall of woman's impu-  
dence?—  
To stand by calmly, knowing what I  
knew,  
And hear him call her *good*?  
Distrust that word.  
“There is none good save God,” said  
Jesus Christ  
If he once, in the first creation-week,  
Called creatures good, forever after-  
ward,  
The Devil only has done it, and his  
heirs,  
The knaves who win so, and the fools  
who lose:  
The word's grown dangerous. In the  
middle age  
I think they called malignant fays  
and imps  
Good people. A good neighbor, even  
in this,  
Is fatal sometimes, cuts your morning  
up  
To mince-meat of the very smallest  
talk,  
Then helps to sugar her bohea at  
night  
With your reputation. I have known  
good wives,  
As chaste, or nearly so, as Potiphar's;  
And good, good mothers, who would  
use a child  
To better an intrigue; good friends,  
beside,  
(Very good) who hung succinctly  
round your neck  
And sucked your breath, as cats are  
fabled to do  
By sleeping infants. And we all have  
known  
Good critics who have stamped out  
poet's hope,  
Good statesmen who pulled ruin on  
the state,  
Good patriots who for a theory risked  
a cause,  
Good kings who disembowelled for a  
tax,  
Good popes who brought all good to  
jeopardy,

Good Christians who sate still in easy-  
chairs  
And damned the general world for  
standing up.  
Now may the good God pardon all  
good men!

How bitterly I speak! how certainly  
The innocent white milk in us is  
turned  
By much persistent shining of the  
sun!  
Shake up the sweetest in us long  
enough  
With men, it drops to foolish curd,  
too sour  
To feed the most untender of Christ's  
lambs.

I should have thought, — a woman of  
the world  
Like her I'm meaning, centre to her-  
self  
Who has wheeled on her own pivot  
half a life  
In isolated self-love and self-will,  
As a windmill seen at distance radi-  
ating  
Its delicate white vans against the  
sky,  
So soft and soundless, simply beauti-  
ful,  
Seen nearer, — what a roar and tear  
it makes,  
How it grinds and bruises! — if she  
loves at last,  
Her love's a re-adjustment of self-  
love,  
No more, — a need felt of another's  
use  
To her one advantage, as the mill  
wants grain,  
The fire wants fuel, the very wolf  
wants prey,  
And none of these is more unscrupu-  
lous  
Than such a charming woman when  
she loves.  
She'll not be thwarted by an obstacle  
So trifling as . . . her soul is . . .  
much less yours! —  
Is God a consideration? — she loves  
you,  
Not God: she will not flinch for him  
indeed:  
She did not for the Marchioness of  
Perth,  
When wanting tickets for the fancy  
ball.

She loves you, sir, with passion, to lunacy,  
She loves you like her diamonds . . . almost.

Well,

A month passed so, and then the notice came,  
On such a day the marriage at the church:

I was not backward.

Half Saint Giles in frieze  
Was bidden to meet Saint James in cloth-of-gold.

And, after contract at the altar, pass  
To eat a marriage-feast on Hampstead Heath.

Of course the people came in uncom-  
pelled,

Lame, blind, and worse; sick, sor-  
rowful, and worse;

The humors of the peccant social  
wound

All pressed out, poured down upon  
Pimlico,

Exasperating the unaccustomed air  
With a hideous interfusion. You'd  
suppose

A finished generation, dead of plague,  
Swept outward from their graves into  
the sun,

The moil of death upon them. What  
a sight!

A holiday of miserable men  
Is sadder than a burial-day of kings.

They clogged the streets, they oozed  
into the church

In a dark slow stream, like blood.  
To see that sight,

The noble ladies stood up in their  
pews,

Some pale for fear, a few as red for  
hate,

Some simply curious, some just insol-  
ent,

And some in wondering scorn, "What  
next? what next?"

These crushed their delicate rose lips  
from the smile

That misbecame them in a holy  
place,

With brodered hems of perfumed  
handkerchiefs;

Those passed the salts, with confi-  
dence of eyes,

And simultaneous shiver of moire  
silk;

While all the aisles, alive and black  
with heads,

Crawled slowly toward the altar from  
the street,

As bruised snakes crawl and hiss out  
of a hole

With shuddering involution, swaying  
slow

From right to left, and then from left  
to right,

In pants and pauses. What an ugly  
crest

Of faces rose upon you everywhere  
From that crammed mass! you did

not usually

See faces like them in the open  
day:

They hide in cellars, not to make you  
mad

As Romney Leigh is. Faces! O my  
God,

We call those faces? — men's and wo-  
men's . . . ay,

And children's; babies, hanging like  
a rag

Forgotten on their mother's neck —  
poor mouths,

Wiped clean of mother's milk by  
mother's blow

Before they are taught her cursing.  
Faces? . . . phew,

We'll call them vices, festering to  
despairs,

Or sorrows, petrifying to vices: not  
A finger-touch of God left whole on

them,  
All ruined, lost, the countenance worn  
out

As the garment, the will dissolute as  
the act,

The passions loose and dragging in  
the dirt,

To trip a foot up at the first free  
step!

Those faces? — 'twas as if you had  
stirred up hell

To heave its lowest dreg-fiends upper-  
most

In fiery swirls of slime, such strangled  
fronts,

Such obdurate jaws, were thrown up  
constantly

To twit you with your race, corrupt  
your blood,

And grind to devilish colors all your  
dreams

Henceforth, though haply you should  
drop asleep

By clink of silver waters, in a muse  
On Raffael's mild Madonna of the

Bird.

I've waked and slept through many  
nights and days  
Since then; but still that day will  
catch my breath  
Like a nightmare. There are fatal  
days, indeed,  
In which the fibrous years have taken  
root  
So deeply, that they quiver to their  
tops  
Whene'er you stir the dust of such a  
day.

My cousin met me with his eyes and  
hand,  
And then, with just a word, . . . that  
"Marian Erle  
Was coming with her bridesmaids  
presently,"  
Made haste to place me by the altar-  
stair  
Where he and other noble gentlemen  
And high-born ladies waited for the  
bride.

We waited. It was early: there was  
time  
For greeting and the morning's com-  
pliment;  
And gradually a ripple of women's  
talk  
Arose and fell, and tossed about a  
spray  
Of English *ss*, soft as a silent hush,  
And, notwithstanding, quite as au-  
dible  
As louder phrases thrown out by the  
men.  
— "Yes, really, if we need to wait in  
church  
We need to talk there." — "She? 'tis  
Lady Ayr,  
In blue, not purple! that's the dow-  
ager."  
"She looks as young" — "She flirts  
as young, you mean.  
Why, if you had seen her upon Thurs-  
day night,  
You'd call Miss Norris modest." —  
"You again!  
I waltzed with you three hours back.  
Up at six,  
Up still at ten; scarce time to change  
one's shoes:  
I feel as white and sulky as a ghost,  
So pray don't speak to me, Lord  
Belcher." — "No,  
I'll look at you instead, and it's  
enough

While you have that face." — "In  
church, my lord! fie, fie!"  
— "Adair, you staid for the Divis-  
ion?" — "Lost  
By one." — "The devil it is! I'm sorry  
for't.  
And if I had not promised Mistress  
Grove" . . .  
"You might have kept your word to  
Liverpool."  
— "Constituents must remember,  
after all,  
We're mortal." — "We remind them  
of it." — "Hark,  
The bride comes! here she comes in  
a stream of milk!"  
— "There? Dear, you are asleep  
still: don't you know  
The five Miss Granvilles? always  
dressed in white  
To show they're ready to be married."  
"Lower!  
The aunt is at your elbow." — "Lady  
Maud,  
Did Lady Waldemar tell you she had  
seen  
This girl of Leigh's?" — "No — wait!  
'twas Mistress Brookes  
Who told me Lady Waldemar told  
her —  
No, 'twasn't Mistress Brookes." —  
"She's pretty?" — "Who?  
Mistress Brookes? Lady Walde-  
mar? — "How hot!  
Pray is't the law to-day we're not to  
breathe?  
You're treading on my shawl — I  
thank you, sir."  
— "They say the bride's a mere child,  
who can't read,  
But knows the things she shouldn't,  
with wide-awake  
Great eyes. I'd go through fire to  
look at her."  
— "You do, I think." — "And Lady  
Waldemar  
(You see her; sitting close to Romney  
Leigh.  
How beautiful she looks, a little  
flushed!)  
Has taken up the girl, and methodized  
Leigh's folly. Should I have come  
here, you suppose,  
Except she'd ask me?" — "She'd  
have served him more  
By marrying him herself."  
"Ah — there she comes,  
The bride, at last!"  
"Indeed, no. Past eleven.

She puts off her patched petticoat to-day  
 And puts on May-fair manners, so begins  
 By setting us to wait." — "Yes, yes, this Leigh  
 Was always odd: it's in the blood, I think.  
 His father's uncle's cousin's second son  
 Was, was . . . you understand me; and for him,  
 He's stark — has turned quite lunatic upon  
 This modern question of the poor — the poor.  
 An excellent subject when you're moderate.  
 You've seen Prince Albert's model lodging-house?  
 Does honor to his Royal Highness. Good!  
 But would he stop his carriage in Cheapside  
 To shake a common fellow by the fist  
 Whose name was . . . Shakspeare? no. We draw a line;  
 And if we stand not by our order, we  
 In England, we fall headlong. Here's a sight, —  
 A hideous sight, a most indecent sight!  
 My wife would come, sir, or I had kept her back.  
 By heaven, sir, when poor Damien's trunk and limbs  
 Were torn by horses, women of the court  
 Stood by and stared, exactly as to-day  
 On this dismembering of society,  
 With pretty, troubled faces."  
 "Now, at last.  
 She comes now."  
 "Where? who sees? you push me, sir,  
 Beyond the point of what is mannerly.  
 You're standing, madam, on my second flounce.  
 I do beseech you" . . .  
 "No — it's not the bride.  
 Half-past eleven. How late! The bridegroom, mark,  
 Gets anxious and goes out."  
 "And, as I said,  
 These Leighs! our best blood running in the rut!  
 It's something awful. We had pardoned him

A simple misalliance got up aside  
 For a pair of sky-blue eyes: the House of Lords  
 Has winked at such things, and we've all been young.  
 But here's an intermarriage reasoned out,  
 A contract (carried boldly to the light  
 To challenge observation, pioneer  
 Good acts by a great example) 'twixt the extremes  
 Of martyred society, — on the left  
 The well-born, on the right the merest mob,  
 To treat as equals! — 'tis anarchical;  
 It means more than it says; 'tis damnable.  
 Why, sir, we can't have even our coffee good,  
 Unless we strain it."  
 "Here, Miss Leigh!"  
 "Lord Howe,  
 You're Romney's friend. What's all this waiting for?"  
 "I cannot tell. The bride has lost her head  
 (And way, perhaps) to prove her sympathy  
 With the bridegroom."  
 "What, — you also disapprove!"  
 "Oh, I approve of nothing in the world,"  
 He answered, "not of you, still less of me,  
 Nor even of Romney, though he's worth us both.  
 We're all gone wrong. The tune in us is lost;  
 And whistling down back alleys to the moon  
 Will never catch it."  
 Let me draw Lord Howe.  
 A born aristocrat, bred radical,  
 And educated socialist, who still  
 Goes floating, on traditions of his kind,  
 Across the theoretic flood from France,  
 Though, like a drenched Noah on a rotten deck,  
 Scarce safer for his place there. He, at least,  
 Will never land on Ararat, he knows,  
 To recommence the world on the new plan:  
 Indeed, he thinks said world had better end.

He sympathizes rather with the fish  
 Outside than with the drowned  
 paired beasts within,  
 Who cannot couple again or multi-  
 ply,—  
 And that's the sort of Noah he is,  
 Lord Howe.  
 He never could be any thing com-  
 plete,  
 Except a loyal, upright gentleman,  
 A liberal landlord, graceful diner-out,  
 And entertainer more than hospita-  
 ble,  
 Whom authors dine with, and forget  
 the hock.  
 Whatever he believes, and it is much,  
 But nowise certain, now here and  
 now there,  
 He still has sympathies beyond his  
 creed  
 Diverting him from action. In the  
 House  
 No party counts upon him, while for  
 all  
 His speeches have a noticeable  
 weight.  
 Men like his books too (he has writ-  
 ten books),  
 Which, safe to lie beside a bishop's  
 chair,  
 At times outreach themselves with  
 jets of fire  
 At which the foremost of the progress-  
 ists  
 May warm audacious hands in pass-  
 ing by.  
 Of stature over-tall, lounging for  
 ease;  
 Light hair, that seems to carry a wind  
 in it;  
 And eyes, that, when they look on  
 you, will lean  
 Their whole weight, half in indolence,  
 and half  
 In wishing you unmitigated good,  
 Until you know not if to flinch from  
 him,  
 Or thank him. — 'Tis Lord Howe.  
 "We're all gone wrong,"  
 Said he; "and Romney, that dear  
 friend of ours,  
 Is nowise right. There's one true  
 thing on earth,  
 That's love: he takes it up, and  
 dresses it,  
 And acts a play with it, as Hamlet  
 did,  
 To show what cruel uncles we have  
 been,

And how we should be uneasy in our  
 minds,  
 While he, Prince Hamlet, weds a  
 pretty maid  
 (Who keeps us too long waiting we'll  
 confess)  
 By symbol to instruct us formally  
 To fill the ditches up 'twixt class and  
 class,  
 And live together in phalansteries.  
 What then? — he's mad, our Hamlet!  
 clap his play,  
 And bind him."  
 "Ah, Lord Howe! this spectacle  
 Pulls stronger at us than the Dane's.  
 See there!  
 The crammed aisles heave and strain  
 and steam with life.  
 Dear Heaven, what life!"  
 "Why, yes, — a poet sees;  
 Which makes him different from a  
 common man.  
 I, too, see somewhat, though I can-  
 not sing:  
 I should have been a poet, only that  
 My mother took fright at the ugly  
 world,  
 And bore me tongue-tied. If you'll  
 grant me now  
 That Romney gives us a fine actor-  
 piece  
 To make us merry on his marriage-  
 morn,  
 The fable's worse than Hamlet's I'll  
 concede.  
 The terrible people, old and poor and  
 blind,  
 Their eyes eat out with plague and  
 poverty  
 From seeing beautiful and cheerful  
 sights,  
 We'll liken to a brutalized King Lear,  
 Led out, — by no means to clear  
 scores with wrongs, —  
 His wrongs are so far back, he has  
 forgot  
 (All's past like youth); but just to  
 witness here  
 A simple contract, — he upon his side,  
 And Regan with her sister Goneril,  
 And all the dappled courtiers and  
 court-fools,  
 On their side. Not that any of these  
 would say  
 They're sorry, neither. What is done  
 is done,  
 And violence is now turned privilege,  
 As cream turns cheese, if buried long  
 enough.



What could such lovely ladies have  
to do  
With the old man there in those ill-  
odorous rags,  
Except to keep the wind-side of him?  
Lear  
Is flat and quiet, as a decent  
grave:  
He does not curse his daughters in  
the least.  
*Be* these his daughters? Lear is  
thinking of  
His porridge chiefly . . . is it getting  
cold  
At Hampstead? will the ale be  
served in pots?  
Poor Lear, poor daughters! Bravo,  
Romney's play."

A murmur and a movement drew  
around;  
A naked whisper touched us. Some-  
thing wrong!  
What's wrong? The black crowd,  
as an overstrained  
Cord, quivered in vibration, and I  
saw . . .  
Was that *his* face I saw? . . . his  
. . . Romney Leigh's . . .  
Which tossed a sudden horror like a  
sponge  
Into all eyes, while himself stood  
white upon  
The topmost altar-stair, and tried to  
speak,  
And failed, and lifted higher above  
his head  
A letter . . . as a man who drowns  
and gasps.

"My brothers, bear with me! I am  
very weak.  
I meant but only good. Perhaps I  
meant  
Too proudly, and God snatched the  
circumstance,  
And changed it therefore. There's  
no marriage — none.  
She leaves me, — she departs, — she  
disappears,  
I lose her. Yet I never forced her  
'ay,'  
To have her 'no' so cast into my  
teeth  
In manner of an accusation, thus.  
My friends you are dismissed. Go,  
eat and drink  
According to the programme — and  
farewell!"

He ended. There was silence in the  
church.  
We heard a baby sucking in its sleep  
At the farthest end of the aisle. Then  
spoke a man,  
"Now, look to it, coves, that all the  
beef and drink  
Be not filched from us, like the other  
fun;  
For beer's spilt easier than a wo-  
man's lost!  
This gentry is not honest with the  
poor:  
They bring us up, to trick us." — "Go  
it, Jim!"  
A woman screamed back. "I'm a  
tender soul;  
I never banged a child at two years  
old,  
And drew blood from him, but I  
sobbed for it  
Next moment, and I've had a plague  
of seven.  
I'm tender: I've no stomach even for  
beef,  
Until I know about the girl that's  
lost,  
That's killed mayhap. I did mis-  
doubt at first,  
The fine lord meant no good by her  
or us.  
He, maybe, got the upper hand of her  
By holding up a wedding-ring, and  
then . . .  
A choking finger on her throat last  
night,  
And just a clever tale to keep us still,  
As she is, poor lost innocent. 'Dis-  
appear!'  
Who ever disappears, except a ghost?  
And who believes a story of a ghost?  
I ask you, would a girl go off, instead  
Of staying to be married? A fine  
tale!  
A wicked man, I say, a wicked man!  
For my part I would rather starve on  
gin  
Than make my dinner on his beef and  
beer."  
At which a cry rose up, "We'll have  
our rights.  
We'll have the girl, the girl! Your  
ladies there  
Are married safely and smoothly  
every day,  
And *she* shall not drop through into a  
trap  
Because she's poor and of the people.  
Shame!"

We'll have no tricks played off by  
gentle folks.  
We'll see her righted."

Through the rage and roar  
I heard the broken words which Rom-  
ney flung

Among the turbulent masses, from  
the ground

He held still with his masterful pale  
face,

As huntsmen throw the ration to the  
pack,

Who, falling on it headlong dog on  
dog

In heaps of fury, rend it, swallow it  
up

With yelling hound-jaws, — his in-  
dignant words,

His suppliant words, his most pa-  
thetic words,

Whereof I caught the meaning here  
and there

By his gesture . . . torn in morsels,  
yelled across,

And so devoured. From end to end,  
the church

Rocked round us like the sea in  
storm, and then

Broke up like the earth in earth-  
quake. Men cried out,

"Police!" and women stood, and  
shrieked for God,

Or dropt and swooned; or, like a herd  
of deer,

(For whom the black woods suddenly  
grow alive,

Unleashing their wild shadows down  
the wind

To hunt the creatures into corners,  
back

And forward), madly fled, or blindly  
fell,

Trod screeching underneath the feet  
of those

Who fled and screeched.  
The last sight left to me

Was Romney's terrible calm face  
above

The tumult. The last sound was,  
"Pull him down!

Strike — kill him!" Stretching my  
unreasoning arms,

As men in dreams, who vainly inter-  
pose

'Twixt gods and their undoing, with  
a cry

I struggled to precipitate myself  
Headforemost to the rescue of my  
soul

In that white face . . . till some one  
caught me back,  
And so the world went out, — I felt  
no more.

What followed was told after by Lord  
Howe,

Who bore me senseless from the  
strangling crowd

In church and street, and then re-  
turned alone

To see the tumult quelled. The men  
of law

Had fallen as thunder on a roaring  
fire,

And made all silent, while the peo-  
ple's smoke

Passed eddying slowly from the emp-  
tied aisles.

Here's Marian's letter, which a rag-  
ged child

Brought running, just as Romney at  
the porch

Looked out expectant of the bride.  
He sent

The letter to me by his friend, Lord  
Howe,

Some two hours after, folded in a  
sheet

On which his well-known hand had  
left a word.

Here's Marian's letter.  
"Noble friend, dear saint,

Be patient with me. Never think me  
vile,

Who might to-morrow morning be  
your wife

But that I loved you more than such  
a name.

Farewell, my Romney. Let me write  
it once, —

My Romney.  
"'Tis so pretty a coupled word,

I have no heart to pluck it with a  
blot.

We say, 'My God' sometimes, upon  
our knees,

Who is not therefore vexed: so bear  
with it . . .

And me. I know I'm foolish, weak,  
and vain;

Yet most of all I'm angry with myself  
For losing your last footstep on the  
stair

That last time of your coming, — yes-  
terday!

The very first time I lost step of  
yours,

(Its sweetness comes the next to what  
you speak,)  
But yesterday sobs took me by the  
throat  
And cut me off from music.

“Mister Leigh,  
You’ll set me down as wrong in many  
things.

You’ve praised me, sir, for truth—  
and now you’ll learn

I had not courage to be rightly true.  
I once began to tell you how she  
came,

The woman . . . and you stared upon  
the floor

In one of your fixed thoughts . . .  
which put me out

For that day. After, some one spoke  
of me

So wisely, and of you so tenderly,  
Persuading me to silence for your  
sake . . .

Well, well! it seems this moment I  
was wrong

In keeping back from telling you the  
truth:

There might be truth betwixt us two,  
at least,

If nothing else. And yet ’twas dan-  
gerous.

Suppose a real angel came from  
heaven

To live with men and women! he’d  
go mad,

If no considerate hand should tie a  
blind

Across his piercing eyes. ’Tis thus  
with you:

You see us too much in your heavenly  
light.

I always thought so, angel, and in-  
deed

There’s danger that you beat yourself  
to death

Against the edges of this alien world,  
In some divine and fluttering pity.

“Yes,  
It would be dreadful for a friend of  
yours

To see all England thrust you out of  
doors,

And mock you from the windows.  
You might say,

Or think (that’s worse), ‘There’s some  
one in the house

I miss and love still.’ Dreadful!

“Very kind,  
I pray you, mark, was Lady Walde-  
mar.

She came to see me nine times, rather  
ten—

So beautiful, she hurts one like the  
day

Let suddenly on sick eyes.

“Most kind of all,  
Your cousin—ah, most like you!  
Ere you came

She kissed me mouth to mouth: I  
felt her soul

Dip through her serious lips in holy  
fire.

God help me; but it made me arro-  
gant.

I almost told her that you would not  
lose

By taking me to wife; though ever  
since

I’ve pondered much a certain thing  
she asked . . .

‘He loves you, Marian?’ . . . in a  
sort of mild

Derisive sadness . . . as a mother  
asks

Her babe, ‘You’ll touch that star,  
you think?’

“Farewell!

I know I never touched it.

“This is worst:  
Babes grow, and lose the hope of  
things above:

A silver threepence sets them leaping  
high—

But no more stars! mark that.

“I’ve writ all night,  
Yet told you nothing. God, if I could  
die,

And let this letter break off innocent  
Just here! But no—for your  
sake . . .

“Here’s the last:

I never could be happy as your wife,  
I never could be harmless as your  
friend,

I never will look more into your face  
Till God says, ‘Look!’ I charge you

seek me not,  
Nor vex yourself with lamentable  
thoughts

That peradventure I have come to  
grief;

Be sure I’m well, I’m merry, I’m at  
ease,

But such a long way, long way, long  
way off,

I think you’ll find me sooner in my  
grave,

And that’s my choice, observe. For  
what remains,

<p>An over-generous friend will care for me, And keep me happy . . . happier . . .                                   " There's a blot ! This ink runs thick . . . we light girls lightly weep . . . And keep me happier . . . was the thing to say, Than as your wife I could be. — Oh, my star, My saint, my soul ! for surely you're my soul, Through whom God touched me ! I am not so lost I cannot thank you for the good you did, The tears you stopped, which fell down bitterly, Like these — the times you made me weep for joy At hoping I should learn to write your notes, And save the tiring of your eyes at night; And most for that sweet thrice you kissed my lips, Saying, ' Dear Marian.'                                   " 'Twould be hard to read, This letter, for a reader half as learned; But you'll be sure to master it in spite Of ups and downs. My hand shakes, I am blind; I'm poor at writing at the best — and yet I tried to make my <i>gs</i> the way you showed. Farewell ! Christ love you ! Say, ' Poor Marian ! ' now."</p> <p>Poor Marian ! — wanton Marian ! — was it so, Or so ? For days, her touching, fool- ish lines We mused on with conjectural fan- tasy, As if some riddle of a summer-cloud On which one tries unlike similitudes, Of now a spotted hydra-skin cast off, And now a screen of carven ivory That shuts the heavens' conventual secrets up From mortals over-bold. We sought the sense. She loved him so perhaps (such words mean love,) That, worked on by some shrewd per- fidious tongue,</p>	<p>(And then I thought of Lady Walde- mar) She left him not to hurt him; or per- haps She loved one in her class; or did not love, But mused upon her wild bad tramp- ing life, Until the free blood fluttered at her heart, And black bread eaten by the road- side hedge Seemed sweeter than being put to Romney's school Of philanthropical self-sacrifice Irrevocably. Girls are girls, be- side, Thought I, and like a wedding by one rule. You seldom catch these birds except with chaff. They feel it almost an immoral thing To go out and be married in broad day, Unless some winning special flattery should Excuse them to themselves for't. . . .                                   " No one parts Her hair with such a silver line as you, One moonbeam from the forehead to the crown !" Or else . . . " You bite your lip in such a way It spoils me for the smiling of the rest ;" And so on. Then a worthless gaud or two To keep for love, — a ribbon for the neck, Or some glass pin, — they have their weight with girls.  And Romney sought her many days and weeks. He sifted all the refuse of the town, Explored the trains, inquired among the ships, And felt the country through from end to end; No Marian ! Though I hinted what I knew, — A friend of his had reasons of her own For throwing back the match, — he would not hear: The lady had been ailing ever since, The shock had harmed her. Some- thing in his tone</p>
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Repressed me; something in me  
 shamed my doubt  
 To a sigh repressed too. He went on  
 to say,  
 That, putting questions where his  
 Marian lodged,  
 He found she had received for vis-  
 itors —  
 Besides himself and Lady Waldemar,  
 And, that once, me — a dubious wo-  
 man dressed  
 Beyond us both: the rings upon her  
 hands  
 Had dazed the children when she  
 threw them pence;  
 “She wore her bonnet as the queen  
 might hers,  
 To show the crown,” they said, — “a  
 scarlet crown  
 Of roses that had never been in bud.”

When Romney told me that, for now  
 and then  
 He came to tell me how the search  
 advanced,  
 His voice dropped. I bent forward for  
 the rest.  
 The woman had been with her, it ap-  
 peared,  
 At first from week to week, then day  
 by day  
 And last, ’twas sure . . .  
 I looked upon the ground  
 To escape the anguish of his eyes, and  
 asked,  
 As low as when you speak to mourn-  
 ers new  
 Of those they cannot bear yet to call  
 dead,  
 “If Marian had as much as named to  
 him  
 A certain Rose, an early friend of  
 hers,  
 A ruined creature.”  
 “Never!” Starting up,  
 He strode from side to side about the  
 room,  
 Most like some prisoned lion sprung  
 awake,  
 Who has felt the desert sting him  
 through his dreams.  
 “What was I to her, that she should  
 tell me aught?  
 A friend! was *I* a friend? I see all  
 clear.  
 Such devils would pull angels out of  
 heaven,  
 Provided they could reach them: ’tis  
 their pride,

And that’s the odds ’twixt soul and  
 body plague!  
 The veriest slave who drops in Cairo’s  
 street  
 Cries, “Stand off from me!” to the  
 passengers;  
 While these blotched souls are eager  
 to infect,  
 And blow their bad breath in a sister’s  
 face,  
 As if they got some ease by it.”

I broke through.

“Some natures catch no plagues. I’ve  
 read of babes  
 Found whole, and sleeping by the  
 spotted breast  
 Of one a full day dead. I hold it  
 true,  
 As I’m a woman and know woman-  
 hood,  
 That Marian Erle, however lured from  
 place,  
 Deceived in way, keeps pure in aim  
 and heart  
 As snow that’s drifted from the gar-  
 den-bank  
 To the open road.”  
 ’Twas hard to hear him laugh.  
 “The figure’s happy. Well, a dozen  
 carts  
 And trampers will secure you pres-  
 ently  
 A fine white snow-drift. Leave it  
 there, your snow!  
 ’Twill pass for soot ere sunset. Pure  
 in aim?  
 She’s pure in aim, I grant you, like  
 myself,  
 Who thought to take the world upon  
 my back  
 To carry it o’er a chasm of social  
 ill,  
 And end by letting slip, through im-  
 potence,  
 A single soul, a child’s weight in a  
 soul,  
 Straight down the pit of hell! Yes, I  
 and she  
 Have reason to be proud of our pure  
 aims.”  
 Then softly, as the last repenting  
 drops  
 Of a thunder-shower, he added, “The  
 poor child,  
 Poor Marian! ’twas a luckless day for  
 her,  
 When first she chanced on my philan-  
 thropy.”

He drew a chair beside me, and sate  
 down;  
 And I instinctively — as women use  
 Before a sweet friend's grief, when  
 in his ear  
 They hum the tune of comfort, though  
 themselves  
 Most ignorant of the special words of  
 such,  
 And quiet so and fortify his brain,  
 And give it time and strength for feel-  
 ing out  
 To reach the availing sense beyond  
 that sound —  
 Went murmuring to him what, if  
 written here,  
 Would seem not much, yet fetched  
 him better help  
 Than peradventure if it had been  
 more.

I've known the pregnant thinkers of  
 our time,  
 And stood by breathless, hanging on  
 their lips,  
 When some chromatic sequence of  
 fine thought  
 In learned modulation phrased itself  
 To an un conjectured harmony of  
 truth;  
 And yet I've been more moved, more  
 raised, I say,  
 By a simple word . . . a broken, easy  
 thing  
 A three-years infant might at need  
 repeat,  
 A look, a sigh, a touch upon the palm,  
 Which meant less than "I love you,"  
 than by all  
 The full-voiced rhetoric of those mas-  
 ter-mouths.

"Ah, dear Aurora," he began at last,  
 His pale lips fumbling for a sort of  
 smile,  
 "Your printer's devils have not spoiled  
 your heart:  
 That's well. And who knows, but  
 long years ago  
 When you and I talked, you were  
 somewhat right  
 In being so peevish with me? You,  
 at least,  
 Have ruined no one through your  
 dreams. Instead,  
 You've helped the facile youth to live  
 youth's day  
 With innocent distraction, still, per-  
 haps

Suggestive of things better than your  
 rhymes.  
 The little shepherd-maiden, eight  
 years old,  
 I've seen upon the mountains of Vau-  
 cluse,  
 Asleep i' the sun, her head upon her  
 knees,  
 The flocks all scattered, is more lau-  
 dable  
 Than any sheep-dog trained imper-  
 fectly,  
 Who bites the kids through too much  
 zeal."

"I look

As if I had slept, then?"

He was touched at once  
 By something in my face. Indeed,  
 'twas sure

That he and I, despite a year or two  
 Of younger life on my side, and on  
 his

The heaping of the years' work on  
 the days,

The three-hour speeches from the  
 member's seat,

The hot committees in and out of  
 doors,

The pamphlets, "Arguments," "Col-  
 lective Views,"

Tossed out as straw before sick  
 houses, just

To show one's sick, and so be trod to  
 dirt,

And no more use, — through this  
 world's underground

The burrowing, groping effort,  
 whence the arm

And heart come torn, — 'twas sure  
 that he and I

Were, after all, unequally fatigued;  
 That he, in his developed manhood,  
 stood

A little sunburnt by the glare of  
 life,

While I . . . it seemed no sun had  
 shone on me,

So many seasons I had missed my  
 springs.

My cheeks had pined and perished  
 from their orbs,

And all the youth-blood in them had  
 grown white

As dew on autumn cyclamens: alone  
 My eyes and forehead answered for  
 my face.

He said, "Aurora, you are changed  
 — are ill!"

“Not so, my éousin,—only not asleep,”  
 I answered, smiling gently. “Let it be.  
 You scarcely found the poet of Vaucluse  
 As drowsy as the shepherds. What is art  
 But life upon the larger scale, the higher,  
 When, graduating up in a spiral line  
 Of still expanding and ascending gyres,  
 It pushes toward the intense significance  
 Of all things, hungry for the Infinite?  
 Art’s life; and where we live, we suffer and toil.”

He seemed to sift me with his painful eyes.  
 “You take it gravely, cousin: you refuse  
 Your dreamland’s right of common, and green rest.  
 You break the mythic turf where danced the nymphs,  
 With crooked ploughs of actual life, let in  
 The axes to the legendary woods,  
 To pay the poll-tax. You are fallen indeed  
 On evil days, you poets, if yourselves  
 Can praise that art of yours no otherwise;  
 And if you cannot . . . better take a trade  
 And be of use: ’twere cheaper for your youth.”

“Of use!” I softly echoed, “there’s the point  
 We sweep about forever in argument,  
 Like swallows which the exasperate, dying year  
 Sets spinning in black circles, round and round,  
 Preparing for far flights o’er unknown seas.  
 And we—where tend we?”  
 “Where?” he said, and sighed.  
 “The whole creation, from the hour we are born,  
 Perplexes us with questions. Not a stone  
 But cries behind us, every weary step,  
 ‘Where, where?’ I leave stones to reply to stones.”

Enough for me and for my fleshly heart  
 To hearken the invocations of my kind,  
 When men catch hold upon my shuddering nerves,  
 And shriek, ‘What help? what hope? what bread i’ the house?  
 What fire i’ the frost?’ There must be some response,  
 Though mine fail utterly. This social Sphinx  
 Who sits between the sepulchres and stews,  
 Makes mock and mow against the crystal heavens,  
 And bullies God,—exacts a word at least  
 From each man standing on the side of God,  
 However paying a sphinx-price for it.  
 We pay it also, if we hold our peace,  
 In pangs and pity. Let me speak and die.  
 Alas! you’ll say I speak and kill instead.”

I pressed in there. “The best men, doing their best,  
 Know peradventure least of what they do;  
 Men usefullest i’ the world are simply used;  
 The nail that holds the wood must pierce it first;  
 And he alone who wields the hammer sees  
 The work advanced by the earliest blow. Take heart.”

“Ah, if I could have taken yours!” he said—  
 “But that’s past now.” Then rising,  
 —“I will take  
 At least your kindness and encouragement.  
 I thank you. Dear, be happy. Sing your songs,  
 If that’s your way; but sometimes slumber too,  
 Nor tire too much with following, out of breath,  
 The rhymes upon your mountains of Delight.  
 Reflect, if art be in truth the higher life,  
 You need the lower life to stand upon  
 In order to reach up unto that higher;

And none can stand a-tiptoe in the  
place  
He cannot stand in with two stable  
feet.  
Remember then! for art's sake hold  
your life.

We parted so. I held him in respect.  
I comprehended what he was in heart  
And sacrificial greatness. Ay, but  
he  
Supposed me a thing too small to  
deign to know.  
He blew me, plainly, from the cruci-  
ble  
As some intruding, interrupting fly,  
Not worth the pains of his analysis  
Absorbed on nobler subjects. Hurt  
a fly!  
He would not for the world: he's  
pitiful  
To flies even. "Sing," says he, "and  
tease me still,  
If that's your way, poor insect."  
That's your way!

#### FIFTH BOOK.

AURORA LEIGH, be humble. Shall I  
hope  
To speak my poems in mysterious  
tune  
With man and nature? with the lava-  
lymph  
That trickles from successive galaxies  
Still drop by drop adown the finger  
of God  
In still new worlds? with summer-  
days in this  
That scarce dare breathe, they are so  
beautiful?  
With spring's delicious trouble in the  
ground,  
Tormented by the quickened blood of  
roots,  
And softly pricked by golden crocus-  
sheaves  
In token of the harvest-time of flow-  
ers?  
With winters and with autumn, and  
beyond  
With the human heart's large sea-  
sons, when it hopes  
And fears, joys, grieves, and loves?  
with all that strain

Of sexual passion, which devours the  
flesh  
In a sacrament of souls? with moth-  
er's breasts,  
Which, round the new-made crea-  
tures hanging there,  
Throb luminous and harmonious like  
pure spheres?  
With multitudinous life, and, finally,  
With the great escapings of ecstatic  
souls,  
Who, in a rush of too long prisoned  
flame,  
Their radiant faces upward, burn  
away  
This dark of the body, issuing on a  
world  
Beyond our mortal? Can I speak my  
verse  
So plainly in tune to these things and  
the rest,  
That men shall feel it catch them on  
the quick,  
As having the same warrant over  
them  
To hold and move them, if they will  
or no,  
Alike imperious as the primal rhythm  
Of that theurgic nature? I must fail,  
Who fail at the beginning to hold and  
move  
One man, and he my cousin, and he  
my friend,  
And he born tender, made intelligent,  
Inclined to ponder the precipitous  
sides  
Of difficult questions, yet obtuse to  
*me*,  
Of *me*, incurious! likes me very  
well,  
And wishes me a paradise of good, —  
Good looks, good means, and good  
digestion, — ay,  
But otherwise evades me, puts me off  
With kindness, with a tolerant gen-  
tleness, —  
Too light a book for a grave man's  
reading! Go,  
Aurora Leigh: be humble.      There it is,  
We women are too apt to look to one,  
Which proves a certain impotence in  
art.  
We strain our natures at doing some-  
thing great,  
Far less because it's something great  
to do  
Than haply that we, so, commend  
ourselves





And used his kingly chrism to  
 straighten out  
 The leathery tongue turned back into  
 the throat;  
 Since when, she lives, remembers,  
 palpitates  
 In every limb, aspires in every  
 breath,  
 Embraces infinite relations. Now  
 We want no half-gods, Panomphaean  
 Joves,  
 Fauns, Naiads, Tritons, Oreads, and  
 the rest,  
 To take possession of a senseless  
 world  
 To unnatural vampire-uses. See the  
 earth,  
 The body of our body, the green  
 earth,  
 Indubitably human like this flesh  
 And these articulated veins through  
 which  
 Our heart drives blood! There's not  
 a flower of spring  
 That dies ere June, but vaunts itself  
 allied  
 By issue and symbol, by significance  
 And correspondence, to that spirit-  
 world  
 Outside the limits of our space and  
 time,  
 Whereto we are bound. Let poets  
 give it voice  
 With human meanings, else they  
 miss the thought,  
 And henceforth step down lower,  
 stand confessed  
 Instructed poorly for interpreters,  
 Thrown out by an easy cowslip in the  
 text.

Even so my pastoral failed: it was a  
 book  
 Of surface-pictures, pretty, cold, and  
 false  
 With literal transcript,—the worse  
 done, I think,  
 For being not ill done: let me set my  
 mark  
 Against such doings, and do other-  
 wise.  
 This strikes me. — If the public whom  
 we know  
 Could catch me at such admissions, I  
 should pass  
 For being right modest. Yet how  
 proud we are  
 In daring to look down upon our-  
 selves!

The critics say that epics have died  
 out  
 With Agamemnon and the goat-  
 nursed gods:  
 I'll not believe it. I could never deem,  
 As Payne Knight did, (the mythic  
 mountaineer  
 Who travelled higher than he was  
 born to live,  
 And showed sometimes the goitre in  
 his throat  
 Discoursing of an image seen through  
 fog.)  
 That Homer's heroes measured  
 twelve feet high.  
 They were but men: his Helen's  
 hair turned gray  
 Like any plain Miss Smith's who  
 wears a front;  
 And Hector's infant whimpered at a  
 plume  
 As yours last Friday at a turkey-  
 cock.  
 All actual heroes are essential men,  
 And all men possible heroes: every  
 age,  
 Heroic in proportions, double-faced,  
 Looks backward and before, expects  
 a morn  
 And claims an epos.  
 Ay; but every age  
 Appears to souls who live in't (ask  
 Carlyle)  
 Most unheroic. Ours, for instance,  
 ours —  
 The thinkers scout it, and the poets  
 abound  
 Who scorn to touch it with a finger-  
 tip —  
 A pewter age, mixed metal, silver-  
 washed —  
 An age of scum, spooned off the richer  
 past, —  
 An age of patches for old gaberdines,  
 An age of mere transition, meaning  
 nought  
 Except that what succeeds must  
 shame it quite  
 If God please. That's wrong think-  
 ing, to my mind,  
 And wrong thoughts make poor po-  
 ems.  
 Every age,  
 Through being beheld too close, is ill  
 discerned  
 By those who have not lived past it.  
 We'll suppose  
 Mount Athos carved, as Alexander  
 schemed,

To some colossal statue of a man.  
 The peasants, gathering brushwood  
 in his ear,  
 Had guessed as little as the browsing  
 goats  
 Of form or feature of humanity  
 Up there, — in fact, had travelled five  
 miles off  
 Or ere the giant image broke on them,  
 Full human profile, nose and chin  
 distinct,  
 Mouth muttering rhythms of silence  
 up the sky,  
 And fed at evening with the blood of  
 sons;  
 Grand torso, — hand that flung per-  
 petually  
 The largesse of a silver river down  
 To all the country pastures. 'Tis  
 even thus  
 With times we live in, — evermore  
 too great  
 To be apprehended near.  
 But poets should  
 Exert a double vision; should have  
 eyes  
 To see near things as comprehen-  
 sively  
 As if afar they took their point of  
 sight,  
 And distant things as intimately deep  
 As if they touched them. Let us  
 strive for this.  
 I do distrust the poet who discerns  
 No character or glory in his times,  
 And trundles back his soul five hun-  
 dred years,  
 Past moat and drawbridge, into a  
 castle-court,  
 To sing — oh, not of lizard or of toad  
 Alive i' the ditch there, — 'twere ex-  
 cusable,  
 But of some black chief, half knight,  
 half sheep-lifter,  
 Some beauteous dame, half chattel  
 and half queen,  
 As dead as must be, for the greater  
 part,  
 The poems made on their chivalric  
 bones;  
 And that's no wonder: death inherits  
 death.

Nay, if there's room for poets in this  
 world  
 A little overgrown, (I think there is)  
 Their sole work is to represent the age,  
 Their age, not Charlemagne's, — this  
 live, throbbing age,

That brawls, cheats, maddens, calcu-  
 lates, aspires,  
 And spends more passion, more hero-  
 ic heat,  
 Betwixt the mirrors of its drawing-  
 rooms,  
 Than Roland with his knights at  
 Roncesvalles.  
 To flinch from modern varnish, coat,  
 or flounce,  
 Cry out for togas and the picturesque,  
 Is fatal, — foolish too. King Arthur's  
 self  
 Was commonplace to Lady Guinevere;  
 And Camelot to minstrels seemed as  
 flat  
 As Fleet Street to our poets.

Never flinch,  
 But still, unscrupulously epic, catch  
 Upon the burning lava of a song  
 The full-veined, heaving, double-  
 breasted age,  
 That, when the next shall come, the  
 men of that  
 May touch the impress with reverent  
 hand, and say,  
 "Behold, behold, the paps we all  
 have sucked!  
 This bosom seems to beat still, or at  
 least  
 It sets ours beating: this is living art,  
 Which thus presents and thus records  
 true life."

What form is best for poems? Let  
 me think  
 Of forms less, and the external  
 Trust the spirit,  
 As sovran nature does, to make the  
 form;  
 For otherwise we only imprison  
 spirit  
 And not embody. Inward evermore  
 To outward, — so in life, and so in art,  
 Which still is life.

Five acts to make a play.  
 And why not fifteen? why not ten?  
 or seven?  
 What matter for the number of the  
 leaves,  
 Supposing the tree lives and grows?  
 exact  
 The literal unities of time and place,  
 When 'tis the essence of passion to  
 ignore  
 Both time and place? Absurd. Keep  
 up the fire,  
 And leave the generous flames to  
 shape themselves.

<p>'Tis true the stage requires obsequiousness To this or that convention; "exit" here And "enter" there; the points for clapping fixed, Like Jacob's white-peeled rods before the rams; And all the close-curved imagery clipped In manner of their fleece at shearing-time. Forget to prick the galleries to the heart Precisely at the fourth act, culminate Our five pyramidal acts with one act more, We're lost so: Shakspeare's ghost could scarcely plead Against our just damnation. Stand aside; We'll muse, for comfort, that last century, On this same tragic stage on which we have failed, A wigless Hamlet would have failed the same.</p> <p>And whosoever writes good poetry Looks just to art. He does not write for you Or me, for London or for Edinburgh; He will not suffer the best critic known To step into his sunshine of free thought And self-absorbed conception, and exact An inch-long swerving of the holy lines. If virtue done for popularity Defiles like vice, can art, for praise or hire, Still keep its splendor, and remain pure art? Eschew such serfdom. What the poet writes, He writes. Mankind accepts it if it suits, And that's success: if not, the poem's passed From hand to hand, and yet from hand to hand, Until the unborn snatch it, crying out In pity on their father's being so dull; And that's success too.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">I will write no plays, Because the drama, less sublime in this,</p>	<p>Makes lower appeals; submits more menially; Adopts the standard of the public taste To chalk its height on; wears a dog-chain round Its regal neck, and learns to carry and fetch The fashions of the day to please the day; Fawns close on pit and boxes, who clap hands, Commending chiefly its docility And humor in stage-tricks; or else, indeed, Gets hissed at, howled at, stamped at like a dog, Or worse, we'll say. For dogs, unjustly kicked, Yell, bite at need; but if your dramatist (Being wronged by some five hundred nobodies, Because their grosser brains most naturally Misjudge the fineness of his subtle wit) Shows teeth an almond's breath, protests the length Of a modest phrase, "My gentle countrymen, There's something in it haply of your fault," Why then, besides five hundred nobodies, He'll have five thousand and five thousand more Against him,—the whole public, all the hoofs Of King Saul's father's asses, in full drove, And obviously deserve it. He appealed To these, and why say more if they condemn, Than if they praise him? Weep, my Æschylus, But low and far, upon Sicilian shores! For since 'twas Athens (so I read the myth) Who gave commission to that fatal weight The tortoise, cold and hard, to drop on thee And crush thee, better cover thy bald head. She'll hear the softest hum of Hyblan bee Before thy loudest protestation.</p>
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Then  
 The risk's still worse upon the modern stage:  
 I could not, for so little, accept success;  
 Nor would I risk so much, in ease and calm,  
 For manifest gains: let those who prize  
 Pursue them: I stand off. And yet forbid  
 That any irreverent fancy or conceit  
 Should litter in the drama's throne-room where  
 The rulers of our art, in whose full veins  
 Dynastic glories mingle, sit in strength  
 And do their kingly work, conceive, command,  
 And from the imagination's crucial heat  
 Catch up their men and women all aflame  
 For action, all alive, and forced to prove  
 Their life by living out heart, brain, and nerve,  
 Until mankind makes witness, "These be men  
 As we are," and vouchsafes the greeting due  
 To Imogen and Juliet, — sweetest kin  
 On art's side.  
 'Tis that, honoring to its worth  
 The drama, I would fear to keep it down  
 To the level of the footlights. Dies no more  
 The sacrificial goat, for Bacchus slain,  
 His filmed eyes fluttered by the whirling white  
 Of choral vestures, troubled in his blood,  
 While tragic voices that clanged keen as swords,  
 Leapt high together with the altar-flame,  
 And made the blue air wink. The waxen mask,  
 Which set the grand, still front of Themis' son  
 Upon the puckered visage of a player;  
 The buskin, which he rose upon and moved,  
 As some tall ship, first conscious of the wind,  
 Sweeps slowly past the piers; the mouthpiece, where

The mere man's voice, with all its breaths and breaks,  
 Went sheathed in brass, and clashed on even heights  
 Its phrasèd thunders, — these things are no more,  
 Which once were. And concluding, which is clear,  
 The growing drama has outgrown such toys  
 Of simulated stature, face, and speech,  
 It also peradventure may outgrow  
 The simulation of the painted scene,  
 Boards, actors, prompters, gaslight, and costume,  
 And take for a worthier stage the soul itself,  
 Its shifting fancies and celestial lights,  
 With all its grand orchestral silences  
 To keep the pauses of its rhythmic sounds.  
 Alas! I still see something to be done,  
 And what I do falls short of what I see,  
 Though I waste myself on doing.  
 Long green days,  
 Worn bare of grass and sunshine;  
 long calm nights,  
 From which the silken sleeps were fretted out, —  
 Be witness for me, with no amateur's irreverent haste and busy idleness  
 I set myself to art! What then? what's done?  
 What's done, at last?  
 Behold, at last, a book.  
 If life-blood's necessary, which it is, —  
 (By that blue vein a-throb on Mahomet's brow,  
 Each prophet-poet's book must show man's blood!)  
 If life-blood's fertilizing, I wrung mine  
 On every leaf of this, unless the drops  
 Slid heavily on one side, and left it dry.  
 That chances often. Many a fervid man  
 Writes books as cold and flat as graveyard stones  
 From which the lichen's scraped; and if St. Preux  
 Had written his own letters, as he might,  
 We had never wept to think of the little mole

'Neath Julie's drooping eyelid. Pas-  
sion is  
But something suffered, after all.  
While art  
Sets action on the top of suffering,  
The artist's part is both to be and  
do,  
Transfixing with a special central  
power  
The flat experience of the common  
man,  
And turning outward, with a sud-  
den wrench,  
Half agony, half ecstacy, the thing  
He feels the inmost, — never felt the  
less  
Because he sings it. Does a torch  
less burn  
For burning next reflectors of blue  
steel,  
That *he* should be the colder for his  
place  
'Twixt two incessant fires, — his per-  
sonal life's,  
And that intense refraction which  
burns back  
Perpetually against him from the  
round  
Of crystal conscience he was born  
into,  
If artist-born? Oh, sorrowful, great  
gift  
Conferred on poets, of a twofold life,  
When one life has been found enough  
for pain!  
We, staggering 'neath our burden as  
mere men,  
Being called to stand up straight as  
demigods,  
Support the intolerable strain and  
stress  
Of the universal, and send clearly  
up  
With voices broken by the human  
sob,  
Our poems to find rhymes among the  
stars!  
But soft, — a "poet" is a word soon  
said,  
A book's a thing soon written. Nay,  
indeed,  
The more the poet shall be questiona-  
ble,  
The more unquestionably comes his  
book.  
And this of mine — well, granting to  
myself  
Some passion in it, furrowing up the  
flats,

Mere passion will not prove a volume  
worth  
Its gall and rags even. Bubbles  
round a keel  
Mean nought, excepting that the ves-  
sel moves.  
There's more than passion goes to  
make a man  
Or book, which is a man too.  
I am sad.  
I wonder if Pygmalion had these  
doubts,  
And, feeling the hard marble first  
relent,  
Grow supple to the straining of his  
arms,  
And tingle through its cold to his  
burning lip,  
Supposed his senses mocked, sup-  
posed the toil  
Of stretching past the known and  
seen to reach  
The archetypal beauty out of sight,  
Had made his heart beat fast enough  
for two,  
And with his own life dazed and  
blinded him!  
Not so. Pygmalion loved; and whose  
loves  
Believes the impossible.  
But I am sad:  
I cannot thoroughly love a work  
of mine,  
Since none seems worthy of my  
thought and hope  
More highly mated. He has shot  
them down,  
My Phœbus Apollo, soul within my  
soul,  
Who judges by the attempted what's  
attained,  
And with the silver arrow from his  
height  
Has struck down all my works before  
my face,  
While I said nothing. Is there aught  
to say?  
I called the artist but a greatened  
man.  
He may be childless also, like a man.  
I labored on alone. The wind and  
dust  
And sun of the world beat blistering  
in my face;  
And hope, now for me, now against  
me, dragged  
My spirits onward, as some fallen  
balloon,

Which, whether caught by blossoming tree or bare,  
Is torn alike. I sometimes touched my aim,  
Or seemed, and generous souls cried out, "Be strong,  
Take courage; now you're on our level — now!  
The next step saves you." I was flushed with praise;  
But, pausing just a moment to draw breath,  
I could not choose but murmur to myself,  
"Is this all? all that's done? and all that's gained?  
If this, then, be success, 'tis dimsmaller  
Than any failure."

O my God, my God,  
O supreme Artist, who, as sole return  
For all the cosmic wonder of thy work,  
Demandest of us just a word . . . a name,  
"My Father!" thou hast knowledge, only thou,  
How dreary 'tis for women to sit still  
On winter nights, by solitary fires,  
And hear the nations praising them far off,  
Too far! ay, praising our quick sense of love,  
Our very heart of passionate womanhood,  
Which could not beat so in the verse,  
without  
Being present also in the un-kissed lips,  
And eyes undried, because there's none to ask  
The reason they grew moist.

To sit alone,  
And think for comfort, how that very night  
Affianced lovers, leaning face to face,  
With sweet half-listenings for each other's breath,  
Are reading haply from a page of ours,  
To pause with a thrill (as if their cheeks had touched)  
When such a stanza, level to their mood,  
Seems floating their own thought out  
— "So I feel  
For thee," — "And I, for thee: this poet knows  
What everlasting love is!" — how that night

Some father, issuing from the misty roads  
Upon the luminous round of lamp and hearth,  
And happy children, having caught up first  
The youngest there, until it shrink and shriek  
To feel the cold chin prick its dimples through  
With winter from the hills, may throw i' the lap  
Of the eldest (who has learnt to drop her lids  
To hide some sweetness newer than last year's)  
Our book, and cry . . . "Ah, you, you care for rhymes:  
So here be rhymes to pore on under trees,  
When April comes to let you! I've been told  
They are not idle, as so many are,  
But set hearts beating pure, as well as fast.  
'Tis yours, the book: I'll write your name in it,  
That so you may not lose, however lost  
In poet's lore and charming revery,  
The thought of how your father thought of *you*  
In riding from the town."

To have our books  
Appraised by love, associated with love,  
While *we* sit loveless! is it hard, you think?  
At least 'tis mournful. Fame, indeed, 'twas said,  
Means simply love. It was a man said that.  
And then there's love and love: the love of all  
(To risk in turn a woman's paradox)  
Is but a small thing to the love of one.  
You bid a hungry child be satisfied  
With a heritage of many cornfields:  
nay,  
He says he's hungry; he would rather have  
That little barley-cake you keep from him  
While reckoning up his harvests. So with us;  
(Here, Romney, too, we fail to generalize!)  
We're hungry.

Hungry! But it's pitiful  
 To wail like unweaned babes, and  
 suck our thumbs,  
 Because we're hungry. Who in all  
 this world  
 (Wherein we are haply set to pray and  
 fast,  
 And learn what good is by its oppo-  
 site)  
 Has never hungered? Woe to him  
 who has found  
 The meal enough! If Ugolino's full,  
 His teeth have crunched some foul  
 unnatural thing;  
 For here satiety proves penury  
 More utterly irremediable. And since  
 We needs must hunger, better, for  
 man's love  
 Than God's truth! better, for com-  
 panions sweet  
 Than great convictions! Let us bear  
 our weights,  
 Preferring dreary hearths to desert  
 souls.  
 Well, well! they say we're envious,  
 we who rhyme;  
 But I—because I am a woman, per-  
 haps,  
 And so rhyme ill—am ill at envying.  
 I never envied Graham his breadth of  
 style,  
 Which gives you, with a random  
 smutch or two,  
 (Near-sighted critics analyze to  
 smutch)  
 Such delicate perspectives of full  
 life;  
 Nor Belmore, for the unity of aim  
 To which he cuts his cedarn poems,  
 fine,  
 As sketchers do their pencils; nor  
 Mark Gage,  
 For that caressing color and tran-  
 cing tone  
 Whereby you're swept away, and  
 melted in  
 The sensual element, which, with a  
 back wave,  
 Restores you to the level of pure  
 souls,  
 And leaves you with Plotinus. None  
 of these,  
 For native gifts or popular applause,  
 I've envied; but for this,—that when  
 by chance  
 Says some one, "There goes Belmore,  
 a great man!  
 He leaves clean work behind him,  
 and requires

No sweeper-up of the chips," . . . a  
 girl I know,  
 Who answers nothing, save with her  
 brown eyes,  
 Smiles unaware, as if a guardian saint  
 Smiled in her; for this, too, that Gage  
 comes home,  
 And lays his last book's prodigal re-  
 view  
 Upon his mother's knee, where, years  
 ago,  
 He laid his childish spelling-book,  
 and learned  
 To chirp, and peck the letters from  
 her mouth,  
 As young birds must. "Well done,"  
 she murmured then:  
 She will not say it now more won-  
 deringly.  
 And yet the last "Well done" will  
 touch him more,  
 As catching up to-day and yesterday  
 In a perfect chord of love. And so,  
 Mark Gage,  
 I envy you your mother—and you,  
 Graham,  
 Because you have a wife who loves  
 you so,  
 She half forgets, at moments, to be  
 proud  
 Of being Graham's wife, until a friend  
 observes,  
 "The boy here has his father's mas-  
 sive brow,  
 Done small in wax . . . if we push  
 back the curls."  
 Who loves me? Dearest father,  
 mother sweet,—  
 I speak the names out sometimes by  
 myself,  
 And make the silence shiver. They  
 sound strange,  
 As Hindostanee to an Ind-born man  
 Accustomed many years to English  
 speech;  
 Or lovely poet-words grown obsolete,  
 Which will not leave off singing. Up  
 in heaven  
 I have my father, with my mother's  
 face  
 Beside him in a blotch of heavenly  
 light;  
 No more for earth's familiar, house-  
 hold use,  
 No more. The best verse written by  
 this hand  
 Can never reach them where they  
 sit, to seem



Well done to *them*. Death quite unfellows us,  
Sets dreadful odds betwixt the live and dead,  
And makes us part, as those at Babel did  
Through sudden ignorance of a common tongue.  
A living Cæsar would not dare to play  
At bowls with such as my dead father is.

And yet this may be less so than appears,  
This change and separation. Sparrows five  
For just two farthings, and God cares for each.  
If God is not too great for little cares,  
Is any creature, because gone to God?  
I've seen some men, veracious, nowise mad,  
Who have thought or dreamed, declared and testified,  
They heard the dead a-ticking like a clock  
Which strikes the hours of the eternities,  
Beside them, with their natural ears, and known  
That human spirits feel the human way,  
And hate the unreasoning awe which waves them off  
From possible communion. It may be.

At least, earth separates as well as heaven.  
For instance, I have not seen Romney Leigh  
Full eighteen months . . . add six, you get two years.  
They say he's very busy with good works,  
Has parted Leigh Hall into almshouses.  
He made one day an almshouse of his heart,  
Which ever since is loose upon the latch  
For those who pull the string.—I never did.

It always makes me sad to go abroad,  
And now I'm sadder that I went to-night

Among the lights and talkers at Lord Howe's.

His wife is gracious, with her glossy braids,

And even voice, and gorgeous eye-balls, calm

As her other jewels. If she's somewhat cold,

Who wonders, when her blood has stood so long

In the ducal reservoir she calls her line

By no means arrogantly? She's not proud;

Not prouder than the swan is of the lake

He has always swum in: 'tis her element,

And so she takes it with a natural grace,

Ignoring tadpoles. She just knows, perhaps,

There *are* who travel without outriders,

Which isn't her fault. Ah, to watch her face,

When good Lord Howe expounds his theories

Of social justice and equality!

'Tis curious what a tender, tolerant bend

Her neck takes; for she loves him, likes his talk,

"Such clever talk—that dear odd Algernon!"

She listens on, exactly as if he talked  
Some Scandinavian myth of Lemures,  
Too pretty to dispute, and too absurd.

She's gracious to me as her husband's friend,

And would be gracious were I not a Leigh,

Being used to smile just so, without her eyes,

On Joseph Strangways, the Leeds mesmerist,

And Delia Dobbs, the lecturer from "the States"

Upon the "Woman's question." Then, for him—

I like him: he's my friend. And all the rooms

Were full of crinkling silks that swept about

The fine dust of most subtle courtesies.

What then? Why, then we come home to be sad.

How lovely one I love not looked to-night!  
 She's very pretty, Lady Waldemar.  
 Her maid must use both hands to twist that coil  
 Of tresses, then be careful lest the rich  
 Bronze rounds should slip: she missed, though, a gray hair,  
 A single one, — I saw it; otherwise  
 The woman looked immortal. How they told,  
 Those alabaster shoulders and bare breasts,  
 On which the pearls, drowned out of sight in milk,  
 Were lost, excepting for the ruby clasp.  
 They split the amaranth velvet bodice down  
 To the waist, or nearly, with the audacious press  
 Of full-breathed beauty. If the heart within  
 Were half as white! — but, if it were, perhaps  
 The breast were closer covered, and the sight  
 Less respectable by half, too.

I heard  
 The young man with the German student's look —  
 A sharp face, like a knife in a cleft stick,  
 Which shot up straight against the parting line  
 So equally dividing the long hair —  
 Say softly to his neighbor (thirty-five  
 And mediæval), "Look that way, Sir Blaise.  
 She's Lady Waldemar, — to the left — in red, —  
 Whom Romney Leigh, our ablest man just now,  
 Is soon about to marry."

Then replied  
 Sir Blaise Delorme, with quiet, priest-like voice,  
 Too used to syllable damnations round  
 To make a natural emphasis worth while,  
 "Is Leigh your ablest man? — the same, I think,  
 Once jilted by a recreant pretty maid  
 Adopted from the people? Now, in change,

He seems to have plucked a flower from the other side  
 Of the social hedge."

"A flower, a flower!" exclaimed  
 My German student, his own eyes full blown  
 Bent on her. He was twenty, certainly.

Sir Blaise resumed with gentle arrogance,  
 As if he had dropped his alms into a hat  
 And gained the right to counsel, "My young friend,  
 I doubt your ablest man's ability  
 To get the least good or help meet for him,  
 For Pagan phalanstery or Christian home,  
 From such a flowery creature."  
 "Beautiful!"  
 My student murmured, rapt. "Mark how she stirs!  
 Just waves her head, as if a flower indeed,  
 Touched far off by the vain breath of our talk."

At which that bilious Grimwald (he who writes  
 For the Renovator), who had seemed absorbed  
 Upon the table-book of autographs, (I dare say mentally he crunched the bones  
 Of all those writers, wishing them alive  
 To feel his tooth in earnest), turned short round  
 With low carnivorous laugh, — "A flower, of course!  
 She neither sews nor spins, and takes no thought  
 Of her garments . . . falling off."

The student flinched;  
 Sir Blaise the same; then both, drawing back their chairs  
 As if they spied black-beetles on the floor,  
 Pursued their talk, without a word being thrown  
 To the critic.  
 Good Sir Blaise's brow is high,  
 And noticeably narrow: a strong wind,  
 You fancy, might unroof him suddenly,

And blow that great top attic off his  
head  
So piled with feudal relics. You ad-  
mire  
His nose in profile, though you miss  
his chin;  
But, though you miss his chin, you  
seldom miss  
His ebon cross worn innermostly,  
(carved  
For penance by a saintly Styrian  
monk  
Whose flesh was too much with him,)  
slipping through  
Some unaware unbuttoned casualty  
Of the under waistcoat. With an ab-  
sent air  
Sir Blaise sate fingering it, and speak-  
ing low,  
While I upon the sofa heard it all.

"My dear young friend, if we could  
bear our eyes,  
Like blessedest St. Lucy, on a plate,  
They would not trick us into choos-  
ing wives,  
As doublets, by the color. Otherwise  
Our fathers chose; and therefore,  
when they had hung  
Their household keys about a lady's  
waist,  
The sense of duty gave her dignity:  
She kept her bosom holy to her  
babes,  
And, if a moralist reproved her dress,  
"Twas, "Too much stareh!" and  
not, "Too little lawn!"

"Now, pshaw!" returned the other  
in a heat,  
A little fretted by being called  
"Young friend,"  
Or so I took it, — "for St. Lucy's sake,  
If she's the saint to swear by, let us  
leave  
Our fathers, — plagued enough about  
our sons!"  
(He stroked his beardless chin) "yes,  
plagued, sir, plagued:  
The future generations lie on us  
As heavy as the nightmare of a seer;  
Our meat and drink grow painful  
prophecy.  
I ask you, have we leisure, if we  
liked,  
To hollow out our weary hands to  
keep  
Your intermittent rushlight of the  
past

From draughts in lobbies? Prejudice  
of sex  
And marriage-law . . . the socket  
drops them through  
While we two speak, however may  
protest  
Some over-delicate nostrils like your  
own,  
'Gainst odors thence arising."  
"You are young,"  
Sir Blaise objected.  
"If I am," he said  
With fire, "though somewhat less so  
than I seem,  
The young run on before, and see the  
thing  
That's coming. 'Reverence for the  
young!' I cry.  
In that new church for which the  
world's near ripe,  
You'll have the younger in the eld-  
er's chair,  
Presiding with his ivory front of hope  
O'er foreheads clawed by cruel car-  
rion birds  
Of life's experience."

"Pray your blessing, sir,"  
Sir Blaise replied good-humoredly.  
"I plucked  
A silver hair this morning from my  
beard,  
Which left me your inferior. Would  
I were  
Eighteen, and worthy to admonish  
you!  
If young men of your order run be-  
fore  
To see such sights as sexual preju-  
dice  
And marriage-law dissolved, — in  
plainer words,  
A general concubinage expressed  
In a universal pruriency, — the thing  
Is scarce worth running fast for, and  
you'd gain  
By loitering with your elders."  
"Ah!" he said,  
"Who, getting to the top of Pisgah-  
hill,  
Can talk with one at bottom of the  
view,  
To make it comprehensible? Why,  
Leigh  
Himself, although our ablest man, I  
said,  
Is scarce advanced to see as far as  
this;  
Which some are. He takes up imper-  
fectly

The social question, — by one handle,  
— leaves  
The rest to trail. A Christian socialist  
Is Romney Leigh, you understand.”

“Not I.

I disbelieve in Christian-Pagans,  
much

As you in women-fishes. If we mix  
Two colors, we lose both, and make a  
third,

Distinct from either. Mark you! to  
mistake

A color is the sign of a sick brain,  
And mine, I thank the saints, is clear  
and cool:

A neutral tint is here impossible.  
The church — and by the church, I  
mean, of course,

The catholic, apostolic, mother-  
church —

Draws lines as plain and straight as  
her own wall,

Inside of which are Christians, obvi-  
ously.

And outside . . . dogs.”

“We thank you. Well I know  
The ancient mother-church would  
fain still bite,

For all her toothless gums, as Leigh  
himself

Would fain be a Christian still, for all  
his wit.

Pass that: you two may settle it for  
me.

You're slow in England. In a month  
I learnt

At Göttingen enough philosophy  
To stock your English schools for  
fifty years;

Pass that too. Here alone, I stop  
you short,

— Supposing a true man like Leigh  
could stand

Unequal in the stature of his life  
To the height of his opinions. Choose  
a wife

Because of a smooth skin? Not he,  
not he!

He'd rail at Venus' self for creaking  
shoes,

Unless she walked his way of right-  
eousness;

And if he takes a Venus Meretrix  
(No imputation on the lady there)  
Be sure, that, by some sleight of  
Christian art,

He has metamorphosed and converted  
her

To a Blessed Virgin.”

“Soft!” Sir Blaise drew breath  
As if it hurt him, — “Soft! no blasphem-  
my,

I pray you!”

“The first Christians did the thing:  
Why not the last?” asked he of Göt-  
tingen,

With just that shade of sneering on  
the lip,

Compensates for the lagging of the  
beard, —

“And so the case is. If that fairest  
fair

Is talked of as the future wife of  
Leigh,

She's talked of too, at least as cer-  
tainly,

As Leigh's disciple. You may find  
her name

On all his missions and commissions,  
schools,

Asylums, hospitals: he had her  
down,

With other ladies whom her starry  
lead

Persuaded from their spheres, to his  
country-place

In Shropshire, to the famed phalan-  
stery

At Leigh Hall, christianized from  
Fourier's own,

(In which he has planted out his sap-  
ling stocks

Of knowledge into social nurseries)  
And there they say she has tarried  
half a week,

And milked the cows, and churned,  
and pressed the curd,

And said ‘My sister’ to the lowest  
drab

Of all the assembled castaways: such  
girls!

Ay, sided with them at the washing-  
tub —

Conceive, Sir Blaise, those naked  
perfect arms,

Round glittering arms, plunged el-  
bow-deep in suds,

Like wild swans hid in lilies all  
a-shake.”

Lord Howe came up. “What, talk-  
ing poetry

So near the image of the unfavorable  
Muse?

That's you, Miss Leigh: I've watched  
you half an hour,

Precisely as I watched the statue  
called

A Pallas in the Vatican. — You mind  
The face, Sir Blaise? — intensely calm  
and sad,  
As wisdom cut it off from fellow-  
ship,  
But *that* spoke louder. — Not a word  
from *you*!  
And these two gentleman were bold,  
I marked,  
And unabashed by even your si-  
lence.”

“ Ah,”  
Said I, “ my dear Lord Howe, you  
shall not speak  
To a printing woman who has lost her  
place  
(The sweet safe corner of the house-  
hold fire  
Behind the heads of children) com-  
pliments,  
As if she were a woman. We who  
have clipt  
The curls before our eyes may see at  
least  
As plain as men do. Speak out, man  
to man,  
No compliments, beseech you.”

“ Friend to friend,  
Let that be. We are sad to-night, I  
saw,  
(— Good-night, Sir Blaise! ah, Smith  
— he has slipped away)  
I saw you across the room, and staid,  
Miss Leigh,  
To keep a crowd of lion-hunters off,  
With faces toward your jungle. There  
were three:  
A spacious lady, five feet ten, and fat,  
Who has the devil in her (and there’s  
room)  
For walking to and fro upon the  
earth,  
From Chippewa to China; she requires  
Your autograph upon a tinted leaf  
’Twixt Queen Pomare’s and Emperor  
Soulouque’s.  
Pray give it! she has energies, though  
fat:  
For me I’d rather see a rick on fire  
Than such a woman angry. Then a  
youth  
Fresh from the backwoods, green as  
the underboughs,  
Asks modestly, Miss Leigh, to kiss  
your shoe,  
And adds he has an epic in twelve  
parts,  
Which when you’ve read, you’ll do it  
for his boot:

All which I saved you, and absorb  
next week  
Both manuscript and man, — because  
a lord  
Is still more potent than a poetess  
With any extreme Republican. Ah,  
ah,  
You smile at last, then.”

“ Thank you.”  
“ Leave the smile.  
I’ll lose the thanks for’t, ay, and  
throw you in  
My transatlantic girl, with golden  
eyes,  
That draw you to her splendid white-  
ness as  
The pistil of a water-lily draws,  
Adust with gold. Those girls across  
the sea  
Are tyrannously pretty, and I swore  
(She seemed to me an innocent frank  
girl)  
To bring her to you for a woman’s  
kiss;  
Not now, but on some other day or  
week:  
— We’ll call it perjury; I give her up.”

“ No, bring her.”  
“ Now,” said he, “ you make it hard  
To touch such goodness with a grimy  
palm.  
I thought to tease you well, and fret  
you cross,  
And steel myself, when rightly vexed  
with you,  
For telling you a thing to tease you  
more.”

“ Of Romney?”  
“ No, no: nothing worse,” he cried,  
“ Of Romney Leigh than what is  
buzzed about, —  
That *he* is taken in an eye-trap too,  
Like many half as wise. The thing  
I mean  
Refers to you, not him.”

“ Refers to me.”

He echoed, — “ ‘ Me ’! You sound it  
like a stone  
Dropped down a dry well very list-  
lessly  
By one who never thinks about the  
toad  
Alive at the bottom. Presently per-  
haps  
You’ll sound your ‘ me ’ more proud-  
ly — till I shrink.”

"Lord Howe's the toad, then, in this question?"

"Brief,  
We'll take it graver. Give me sofa-room,  
And quiet hearing. You know Eglinton,—  
John Eglinton of Eglinton in Kent?"

"Is *he* the toad? He's rather like the snail,  
Known chiefly for the house upon his back:  
Divide the man and house, you kill the man:  
That's Eglinton of Eglinton, Lord Howe."

He answered grave: "A reputable man,  
An excellent landlord of the olden stamp  
If somewhat slack in new philanthropies,  
Who keeps his birthdays with a tenants' dance,  
Is hard upon them when they miss the church  
Or hold their children back from catechism,  
But not ungentle when the aged poor  
Pick sticks at hedgesides: nay, I've heard him say,  
'The old dame has a twinge because she stoops:  
That's punishment enough for felony.'"

"O tender-hearted landlord! may I take  
My long lease with him, when the time arrives  
For gathering winter-fagots!"  
"He likes art;  
Buys books and pictures . . . of a certain kind;  
Neglects no patent duty; a good son" . . .

"To a most obedient mother. Born to wear  
His father's shoes, he wears her husband's too:  
Indeed I've heard it's touching.  
Dear Lord Howe,  
You shall not praise *me* so against your heart  
When I'm at worst for praise and fagots."

"Be  
Less bitter with me; for . . . in short,"  
he said,  
"I have a letter, which he urged me  
so  
To bring you . . . I could scarcely  
choose but yield;  
Insisting that a new love, passing  
through  
The hand of an old friendship, caught  
from it  
Some reconciling odor."  
"Love, you say?"  
My lord, I cannot love: I only find  
The rhyme for love; and that's not  
love, my lord.  
Take back your letter."

"Pause. You'll read it first?"  
"I will not read it: it is stereotyped,  
The same he wrote to,—anybody's  
name,  
Anne Blythe the actress, when she  
died so true  
A duchess fainted in a private box;  
Pauline the dancer, after the great  
*pas*  
In which her little feet winked over-  
head  
Like other fireflies, and amazed the  
pit;  
Or Baldinacci, when her F in alt  
Had touched the silver tops of heaven  
itself  
With such a pungent spirit-dart, the  
Queen  
Laid softly, each to each, her white-  
gloved palms,  
And sighed for joy; or else (I thank  
your friend)  
Aurora Leigh, when some indifferent  
rhymes,  
Like those the boys sang round the  
holy ox  
On Memphis-highway, chance per-  
haps to set  
Our Apis-public lowing. Oh, he  
wants,  
Instead of any worthy wife at home,  
A star upon his stage of Eglinton?  
Advise him that he is not over-  
shrewd  
In being so little modest: a dropped  
star  
Makes bitter waters, says a Book I've  
read,—  
And there's his unread letter."  
"My dear friend,"  
Lord Howe began . . .

In haste I tore the phrase.  
 "You mean your friend of Eglinton,  
 or me?"

"I mean you, you!" he answered  
 with some fire.

"A happy life means prudent com-  
 promise;

The tare runs through the farmer's  
 garnered sheaves,

And, though the gleaner's apron holds  
 pure wheat

We count her poorer. Tare with  
 wheat, we cry,

And good with drawbacks. You, you  
 love your art,

And, certain of vocation, set your  
 soul

On utterance. Only, in this world  
 we have made,

(They say God made it first, but if he  
 did

'Twas so long since, and, since, we  
 have spoiled it so,

He scarce would know it, if he looked  
 this way,

From bells we preach of, with the  
 flames blown out.)

-- In this bad, twisted, topsy-turvy  
 world,

Where all the heaviest wrongs get  
 uppermost, --

In this uneven, unfostering England  
 here,

Where ledger-strokes and sword-  
 strokes count indeed,

But soul-strokes merely tell upon the  
 flesh

They strike from, -- it is hard to stand  
 for art,

Unless some golden tripod from the sea  
 Be fished up, by Apollo's divine

chance,  
 To throne such feet as yours, my

prophetess,  
 At Delphi. Think, -- the god comes

down as fierce  
 As twenty bloodhounds, shakes you,

strangles you,  
 Until the oracular shriek shall ooze in

froth!

At best 'tis not all ease; at worst  
 too hard.

A place to stand on is a 'vantage  
 gained,

And here's your tripod. To be plain,  
 dear friend,

You're poor, except in what you rich-  
 ly give;

You labor for your own bread pain-  
 fully,  
 Or ere you pour our wine. For art's  
 sake, pause."

I answered slow, -- as some wayfar-  
 ing man,

Who feels himself at night too far  
 from home,

Makes steadfast face against the bitter  
 wind, --

"Is art so less a thing than virtue  
 is,

That artists first must cater for their  
 ease,

Or ever they make issue past them-  
 selves

To generous use? Alas! and is it so,  
 That we who would be somewhat

clean must sweep  
 Our ways, as well as walk them, and

no friend  
 Confirm us nobly, -- 'Leave results

to God,  
 But you, be clean!' What! 'pru-  
 dent compromise

Makes acceptable life,' you say in-  
 stead, --

You, you, Lord Howe? -- in things  
 indifferent, well.

For instance, compromise the wheaten  
 bread

For rye, the meat for lentils, silk for  
 serge,

And sleep on down, if needs, for sleep  
 on straw;

But there end compromise. I will  
 not bate

One artist-dream on straw or down,  
 my lord,

Nor pinch my liberal soul, though I  
 be poor,

Nor cease to love high, though I live  
 thus low."

So speaking, with less anger in my  
 voice

Than sorrow, I rose quickly to de-  
 part;

While he, thrown back upon the noble  
 shame

Of such high stumbling natures, mur-  
 mured words, --

The right words after wrong ones.  
 Ah, the man

Is worthy, but so given to entertain  
 Impossible plans of superhuman life,

He sets his virtues on so raised a  
 shelf,

To keep them at the grand millennial  
height,  
He has to mount a stool to get at  
them,  
And meantime lives on quite the  
common way.  
With everybody's morals.

As we passed,  
Lord Howe insisting that his friendly  
arm  
Should oar me across the sparkling,  
brawling stream  
Which swept from room to room, we  
fell at once  
On Lady Waldemar. "Miss Leigh,"  
she said,  
And gave me such a smile, — so cold  
and bright,  
As if she tried it in a 'tiring glass  
And liked it, — "all to-night I've  
strained at you

As babes at bawbles held up out of  
reach  
By spiteful nurses, ('Never snatch,'  
they say,)  
And there you sate, most perfectly  
shut in

By good Sir Blaise and clever Mister  
Smith,  
And then our dear Lord Howe! At  
last indeed  
I almost snatched. I have a world to  
speak

About your cousin's place in Shrop-  
shire where  
I've been to see his work . . . our  
work, — you heard  
I went? . . . and of a letter yester-  
day,

In which if I should read a page or  
two  
You might feel interest, though you're  
locked of course

In literary toil. — You'll like to  
hear

Your last book lies at the phalan-  
stery,  
As judged innocuous for the elder  
girls

And younger women who still care  
for books.

We all must read, you see, before we  
live,  
Till slowly the ineffable light comes  
up

And as it deepens drowns the written  
word:

So said your cousin, while we stood  
and felt

A sunset from his favorite beech-tree  
seat.

He might have been a poet if he  
would;

But then he saw the higher thing at  
once

And climbed to it. I think he looks  
well now,

Has quite got over that unfortu-  
nate . . .

Ah, ah . . . I know it moved you.  
Tender-heart!

You took a liking to the wretched  
girl.

Perhaps you thought the marriage  
suitable,

Who knows? A poet hankers for ro-  
mance,

And so on. As for Romney Leigh,  
'tis sure

He never loved her, — never. By the  
way,

You have not heard of *her* . . . ?  
Quite out of sight,

And out of saving? Lost in every  
sense?"

She might have gone on talking half  
an hour

And I stood still, and cold, and pale,  
I think,

As a garden-statue a child pelts with  
snow

For pretty pastime. Every now and  
then

I put in "yes" or "no," I scarce  
knew why:

The blind man walks wherever the  
dog pulls,

And so I answered. Till Lord Howe  
broke in:

"What penance takes the wretch who  
interrupts

The talk of charming women? I at  
last

Must brave it. Pardon, Lady Walde-  
mar!

The lady on my arm is tired, unwell,  
And loyally I've promised she shall  
say

No harder word this evening than . . .  
good-night:

The rest her face speaks for her." —  
Then we went.

And I breathe large at home. I drop  
my cloak,

Unclasp my girdle, loose the band  
that ties





"We fell at once on Lady Waldemar." — Page 96.



My hair . . . now could I but unloose  
 my soul!  
 We are sepulchred alive in this close  
 world,  
 And want more room.  
 The charming woman there—  
 This reckoning up and writing down  
 her talk  
 Affects me singularly. How she  
 talked  
 To pain me! woman's spite. You  
 wear steel mail;  
 A woman takes a housewife from her  
 breast,  
 And plucks the delicatest needle out  
 As 'twere a rose, and pricks you care-  
 fully  
 'Neath nails, 'neath eyelids, in your  
 nostrils, say:  
 A beast would roar so tortured; but  
 a man,  
 A human creature, must not, shall  
 not, flinch,  
 No, not for shame.  
 What vexes, after all,  
 Is just that such as she, with such  
 as I,  
 Knows how to vex. Sweet Heaven!  
 she takes me up  
 As if she had fingered me, and dog-  
 eared me,  
 And spelled me by the fireside half  
 a life.  
 She knows my turns, my feeble  
 points. What then?  
 The knowledge of a thing implies the  
 thing:  
 Of course, she 'ound *that* in me, she  
 saw *that*,  
 Her pencil underscored *this* for a  
 fault,  
 And I, still ignorant. Shut the book  
 up—close!  
 And crush that beetle in the leaves.  
 O heart!  
 "At last we shall grow hard too, like  
 the rest.  
 And call it self-defence because we  
 are soft.  
 And after all, now . . . why should  
 I be pained  
 That Romney Leigh, my cousin,  
 should espouse  
 This Lady Waldemar? And, say  
 she held  
 Her newly blossomed gladness in my  
 face, . . .  
 'T was natural surely, if not generous,  
 Considering how, when winter held  
 her fast,  
 I helped the frost with mine, and  
 pained her more  
 Than she pains me. Pains me!—  
 But wherefore pained?  
 'Tis clear my cousin Romney wants  
 a wife.  
 So, good! The man's need of the  
 woman, here,  
 Is greater than the woman's of the  
 man,  
 And easier served; for where the man  
 discerns  
 A sex (ah, ah, the man can general-  
 ize,  
 Said he), we see but one ideally  
 And really: where we yearn to lose  
 ourselves,  
 And melt like white pearls, in an-  
 other's wine,  
 He seeks to double himself by what  
 he loves,  
 And makes his drink more costly by  
 our pearls.  
 At board, at bed, at work and holi-  
 day,  
 It is not good for man to be alone;  
 And that's his way of thinking, first  
 and last,  
 And thus my cousin Romney wants  
 a wife.  
 But then my cousin sets his dignity  
 On personal virtue. If he under-  
 stands  
 By love, like others, self-aggrandize-  
 ment,  
 It is that he may verily be great  
 By doing rightly and kindly. Once  
 he thought,  
 For charitable ends set duly forth  
 In heaven's white judgment-book, to  
 marry . . . ah,  
 We'll call her name Aurora Leigh,  
 although  
 She's changed since then!— and  
 once, for social ends,  
 Poor Marian Erle, my sister Marian  
 Erle,  
 My woodland sister, sweet maid Mar-  
 ian,  
 Whose memory moans on in me like  
 the wind  
 Through ill-shut casements, making  
 me more sad  
 Than ever I find reasons for. Alas,  
 Poor pretty plaintive face, embodied  
 ghost!

He finds it easy, then, to clap thee off  
From pulling at his sleeve and book  
and pen,  
He locks thee out at night into the  
cold,  
Away from butting with thy horny  
eyes  
Against his crystal dreams, that now  
he's strong  
To love anew? that Lady Waldemar  
Succeeds my Marian?

After all, why not?  
He loved not Marian more than once  
he loved  
Aurora. If he loves at last that  
third,  
Albeit she prove as slippery as spilt  
oil  
On marble floors, I will not augur  
him  
Ill luck for that. Good love, how'er  
ill placed,  
Is better for a man's soul in the end  
Than if he loved ill what deserves  
love well.

A Pagan kissing for a step of Pan.  
The wild-goat's hoof-print on the  
loamy down,  
Exceeds our modern thinker who  
turns back  
The strata . . . granite, limestone,  
coal, and clay,  
Concluding coldly with, "Here's  
law! where's God?"

And then at worse, — if Romney loves  
her not, —  
At worst, — if he's incapable of love,  
(Which may be), — then, indeed, for  
such a man  
Incapable of love, she's good enough;  
For she, at worst too, is a woman still,  
And loves him . . . as the sort of  
woman can.

My loose long hair began to burn and  
creep,  
Alive to the very ends, about my  
knees:  
I swept it backward, as the wind  
sweeps flame,  
With the passion of my hands. Ah,  
Romney laughed  
One day . . . (how full the memories  
come up!)  
— "Your Florence fireflies live on in  
your hair."  
He said, "it gleams so." Well, I  
wrung them out,

My fireflies; made a knot as hard as  
life  
Of those loose, soft, impracticable  
curls,  
And then sat down and thought . . .  
"She shall not think  
Her thought of me," — and drew my  
desk, and wrote.

"Dear Lady Waldemar, I could not  
speak  
With people round me, nor can sleep  
to-night,  
And not speak, after the great news  
I heard  
Of you and of my cousin. May you be  
Most happy, and the good he meant  
the world  
Replenish his own life! Say what I  
say,  
And let my word be sweeter for your  
mouth,  
As you are *you* . . . I only Aurora  
Leigh."

That's quiet, guarded: though she  
hold it up  
Against the light, she'll not see  
through it more  
Than lies there to be seen. So much  
for pride;  
And now for peace a little. Let me  
stop  
All writing back . . . "Sweet thanks,  
my sweetest friend,  
You've made more joyful my great  
joy itself."  
— No, that's too simple: she would  
twist it thus,  
"My joy would still be as sweet as  
thyme in drawers,  
However shut up in the dark and  
dry;  
But violets aired and dewed by love  
like yours  
Outsmell all thyme: we keep that in  
our clothes,  
But drop the other down our bosoms  
till  
They smell like" . . . Ah! I see her  
writing back  
Just so. She'll make a nosegay of  
her words,  
And tie it with blue ribbons at the  
end,  
To suit a poet. Pshaw!  
And then we'll have  
The call to church; the broken, sad,  
bad dream

Dreamed out at last ; the marriage-  
vow complete  
With the marriage-breakfast ; praying  
in white gloves,  
Drawn off in haste for drinking pagan  
toasts  
In somewhat stronger wine than any  
sipped  
By gods since Bacchus had his way  
with grapes.

A postscript stops all that and rescues  
me.

"You need not write. I have been  
overworked,

And think of leaving London, Eng-  
land even,

And hastening to get nearer to the sun,  
Where men sleep better. So, adieu !"

I fold  
And seal ; and now I'm out of all  
the coil :

I breathe now, I spring upward like a  
branch

The ten-years' schoolboy with a  
crooked stick

May pull down to his level in search  
of nuts,

But cannot hold a moment. How we  
twang

Back on the blue sky, and assert our  
height,

While he stares after ! Now, the won-  
der seems

That I could wrong myself by such a  
doubt.

We poets always have uneasy hearts,  
Because our hearts, large-rounded as  
the globe,

Can turn but one side to the sun at  
once.

We are used to dip our artist hands in  
gall

And potash, trying potentialities  
Of alternated color, till at last

We get confused, and wonder for our  
skin

How nature tinged it first. Well,  
here's the true

Good flesh-color : I recognize my  
hand,

Which Romney Leigh may clasp as  
just a friend's,

And keep his clean.

And now, my Italy.

Alas ! if we could ride with naked  
souls,

And make no noise, and pay no price  
at all,

I would have seen thee sooner, Italy ;  
For still I have heard thee crying  
through my life,  
Thou piercing silence of ecstatic  
graves.  
Men call that name.

But even a witch to-day  
Must melt down golden pieces in the  
nard,

Wherewith to anoint her broomstick  
ere she rides ;

And poets evermore are scant of gold,  
And if they find a piece behind the  
door,

It turns by sunset to a withered leaf.  
The Devil himself scarce trusts his  
patented

Gold-making art to any who make  
rhymes,

But culls his Faustus from philoso-  
phers,

And not from poets. "Leave my  
Job," said God ;

And so the Devil leaves him without  
pence,

And poverty proves plainly special  
grace.

In these new, just, administrative  
times

Men clamor for an order of merit :  
why ?

Here's black bread on the table, and  
no wine !

At least I am a poet in being poor,  
Thank God ! I wonder if the manu-  
script

Of my long poem, if 'twere sold out-  
right,

Would fetch enough to buy me shoes  
to go

Afoot (thrown in, the necessary  
patch

For the other side the Alps) ? It can-  
not be.

I fear that I must sell this residue  
Of my father's books, although the

Elzevirs  
Have fly-leaves over-written by his  
hand

In faded notes as thick and fine and  
brown

As cobwebs on a tawny monument  
Of the old Greeks — *conferenda hæc*

*cum his* —

*Corruptè citat — lege potiùs,*

And so on, in the scholar's regal  
way

Of giving judgment on the parts of  
speech,  
As if he sate on all twelve thrones up-  
piled,  
Arraigning Israel. Ay, but books  
and notes  
Must go together. And this Proclus  
too,  
In these dear quaint contracted Gre-  
cian types,  
Fantastically crumpled, like his  
thoughts,  
Which would not seem too plain ;  
you go round twice  
For one step forward, then you take it  
back,  
Because you're somewhat giddy ;  
there's the rule  
For Proclus. Ah, I stained this mid-  
dle leaf  
With pressing in't my Florence iris-  
bell,  
Long stalk and all. My father chided  
me  
For that stain of blue blood. I recol-  
lect  
The peevish turn his voice took, —  
"Silly girls !  
Who plant their flowers in our phi-  
losophy  
To make it fine, and only spoil the  
book.  
No more of it, Aurora." Yes — no  
more.  
Ah, blame of love, that's sweeter than  
all praise  
Of those who love not ! 'Tis so lost  
to me,  
I cannot, in such beggared life, afford  
To lose my Proclus — not for Florence  
even.

The kissing Judas, Wolff, shall go  
instead,  
Who builds us such a royal book as  
this  
To honor a chief poet, folio-built,  
And writes above, "The house of No-  
body !"  
Who floats in cream as rich as any  
sucked  
From Juno's breasts, the broad Ho-  
meric lines,  
And while with their spondaic pro-  
digious mouths  
They lap the lucent margins as babe-  
gods,  
Proclaims them bastards. Wolff's  
an atheist ;

And if the Iliad fell out, as he says,  
By mere fortuitous concourse of old  
songs,  
Conclude as much, too, for the uni-  
verse.

That Wolff, those Platos : sweep the  
upper shelves  
As clean as this, and so I am almost  
rich,  
Which means, not forced to think of  
being poor  
In sight of ends. To-morrow : no  
delay.  
I'll wait in Paris till good Carrington  
Dispose of such, and, having chattered  
for  
My book's price with the publisher,  
direct  
All proceeds to me. Just a line to  
ask  
His help.

And now I come, my Italy,  
My own hills ! Are you 'ware of me,  
my hills, —  
How I burn toward you ? do you feel  
to-night  
The urgency and yearning of my soul,  
As sleeping mothers feel the sucking  
babe,  
And smile ? Nay, not so much as  
when in heat  
Vain lightnings catch at your invio-  
late tops  
And tremble, while ye are steadfast.  
Still ye go  
Your own determined, calm, indiffer-  
ent way  
Toward sunrise, shade by shade, and  
light by light,  
Of all the grand progression nought  
left out,  
As if God verily made you for your-  
selves,  
And would not interrupt your life  
with ours.

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#### SIXTH BOOK.

THE English have a scornful insular  
way  
Of calling the French light. The  
levity  
Is in the judgment only, which yet  
stands ;

For, say a foolish thing but oft enough  
 (And here's the secret of a hundred  
 creeds,  
 Men get opinions as boys learn to  
 spell,  
 By re-iteration chiefly), the same  
 thing  
 Shall pass at last for absolutely wise,  
 And not with fools exclusively. And  
 so  
 We say the French are light, as if we  
 said  
 The cat mews, or the milch-cow gives  
 us milk:  
 Say, rather, cats are milked, and  
 milch-cows mew;  
 For what is lightness but inconse-  
 quence,  
 Vague fluctuation 'twixt effect and  
 cause,  
 Compelled by neither? Is a bullet  
 light,  
 That dashes from the gun-mouth,  
 while the eye  
 Winks and the heart beats one, to  
 flatten itself  
 To a wafer on the white speck on a  
 wall  
 A hundred paces off? Even so di-  
 rect,  
 So sternly undivertible of aim,  
 Is this French people.

All idealists

Too absolute and earnest, with them  
 all  
 The idea of a knife cuts real flesh;  
 And still, devouring the safe inter-  
 val  
 Which nature placed between the  
 thought and act  
 With those too fiery and impatient  
 souls,  
 They threaten conflagration to the  
 world,  
 And rush with most unscrupulous  
 logic on  
 Impossible practice. Set your orators  
 To blow upon them with loud windy  
 mouths  
 Through watchword phrases, jest or  
 sentiment,  
 Which drive our burly brutal English  
 mobs,  
 Like so much chaff, whichever way  
 they blow. —  
 This light French people will not thus  
 be driven.  
 They turn indeed; but then they  
 turn upon

Some central pivot of their thought  
 and choice,  
 And veer out by the force of holding  
 fast.  
 That's hard to understand, for Eng-  
 lishmen  
 Unused to abstract questions, and un-  
 trained  
 To trace the involutions, valve by  
 valve,  
 In each orb'd bulb-root of a general  
 truth,  
 And mark what subtly fine integu-  
 ment  
 Divides opposed compartments. Free-  
 dom's self  
 Comes concrete to us, to be under-  
 stood,  
 Fixed in a feudal form incarnately  
 To suit our ways of thought and re-  
 verence;  
 The special form, with us, being still  
 the thing.  
 With us, I say, though I'm of Italy  
 By mother's birth and grave, by  
 father's grave  
 And memory, let it be, — a poet's  
 heart  
 Can swell to a pair of nationalities,  
 However ill lodged in a woman's  
 breast.

And so I am strong to love this noble  
 France,  
 This poet of the nations, who dreams on  
 And wails on (while the household  
 goes to wreck)  
 Forever, after some ideal good,  
 Some equal poise of sex, some un-  
 vowed love  
 Inviolable, some spontaneous brother-  
 hood,  
 Some wealth that leaves none poor  
 and finds none tired,  
 Some freedom of the many that re-  
 spects  
 The wisdom of the few. Heroic  
 dreams!  
 Sublime to dream so; natural to  
 wake;  
 And sad to use such lofty scaffold-  
 ings,  
 Erected for the building of a church,  
 To build, instead, a brothel or a pris-  
 on.  
 May God save France!  
 And if at last she sighs  
 Her great soul up into a great man's  
 face,

To flush his temples out so gloriously  
That few dare carp at Cæsar for being  
bald,  
What then? This Cæsar represents,  
not reigns,  
And is no despot, though twice absolute:  
This head has all the people for a  
heart;  
This purple's lined with the democracy,—  
Now let him see to it! for a rent  
within  
Would leave irreparable rags with-  
out.

A serious riddle: find such anywhere  
Except in France, and, when 'tis  
found in France,  
Be sure to read it rightly. So, I  
mused  
Up and down, up and down, the ter-  
raced streets,  
The glittering boulevards, the white  
colonnades,  
Of fair fantastic Paris who wears  
trees  
Like plumes, as if man made them,  
spire and tower  
As if they had grown by nature, toss-  
ing up  
Her fountains in the sunshine of the  
squares,  
As if in beauty's game she tossed the  
dice,  
Or blew the silver down-balls of her  
dreams  
To sow futurity with seeds of thought,  
And count the passage of her festive  
hours.

The city swims in verdure, beautiful  
As Venice on the waters,—the sea-  
swan.  
What bosky gardens dropped in close-  
walled courts,  
Like plums in ladies' laps who start  
and laugh!  
What miles of streets that run on  
after trees,  
Still carrying all the necessary shops,  
Those open caskets with the jewels  
seen!  
And trade is art, and art's philoso-  
phy,  
In Paris. There's a silk, for instance,  
there,  
As worth an artist's study for the  
folds,

As that bronze opposite! nay, the  
bronze has faults;  
Art's here too artful,—conscious as a  
maid  
Who leans to mark her shadow on  
the wall  
Until she lose a 'vantage in her step.  
Yet art walks forward, and knows  
where to walk:  
The artists also are idealists,  
Too absolute for nature, logical  
To austerity in the application of  
The special theory; not a soul con-  
tent  
To paint a crooked pollard and an  
ass,  
As the English will, because they find  
it so,  
And like it somehow.—There the old  
Tuileries  
Is pulling its high cap down on its  
eyes,  
Confounded, conscience-stricken, and  
amazed  
By the apparition of a new fair face  
In those devouring mirrors. Through  
the grate  
Within the gardens, what a heap of  
babes,  
Swept up like leaves beneath the  
chestnut-trees  
From every street and alley of the  
town,  
By ghosts, perhaps, that blow too  
bleak this way  
A-looking for their heads! dear pretty  
babes,  
I wish them luck to have their ball-  
play out  
Before the next change. Here the air  
is thronged  
With statues poised upon their col-  
umns fine,  
As if to stand a moment were a feat,  
Against that blue! What squares!  
what breathing-room  
For a nation that runs fast, ay, runs  
against  
The dentist's teeth at the corner in  
pale rows,  
Which grin at progress, in an epi-  
gram!  
I walked the day out, listening to the  
chink  
Of the first Napoleon's bones in his  
second grave,  
By victories guarded 'neath the gold-  
en dome



That caps all Paris like a bubble.  
 " Shall  
 These dry bones live," thought Louis  
 Philippe once,  
 And lived to know. Herein is argu-  
 ment  
 For kings and politicians, but still  
 more  
 For poets, who bear buckets to the  
 well  
 Of ampler draught.  
 These crowds are very good  
 For meditation (when we are very  
 strong,)  
 Though love of beauty makes us tim-  
 orous,  
 And draws us backward from the  
 coarse town-sights  
 To count the daisies upon dappled  
 fields,  
 And hear the streams bleat on among  
 the hills  
 In innocent and indolent repose;  
 While still with silken elegiac thoughts  
 We wind out from us the distracting  
 world,  
 And die into the chrysalis of a man,  
 And leave the best that may, to come  
 of us,  
 In some brown moth. I would be  
 bold, and bear,  
 To look into the swarthiest face of  
 things,  
 For God's sake who has made them.  
 Six days' work;  
 The last day shutting 'twixt its dawn  
 and eve  
 The whole work bettered of the pre-  
 vious five!  
 Since God collected and resumed in  
 man  
 The firmaments, the strata, and the  
 lights,  
 Fish, fowl, and beast, and insect,—  
 all their trains  
 Of various life caught back upon his  
 arm,  
 Re-organized, and constituted MAN,  
 The microcosm, the adding-up of  
 works;  
 Within whose fluttering nostrils, then,  
 at last  
 Consummating himself the Maker  
 sighed,  
 As some strong winner at the foot-  
 race sighs  
 Touching the goal.  
 Humanity is great;  
 And if I would not rather pore upon

An ounce of common, ugly, human  
 dust,  
 An artisan's palm or a peasant's brow,  
 Unsmooth, ignoble, save to me and  
 God,  
 Than track old Nilus to his silver  
 roots,  
 Or wait on all the changes of the  
 moon  
 Among the mountain-peaks of Thes-  
 saly  
 (Until her magic crystal round itself  
 For many a witch to see in)—set it  
 down  
 As weakness, strength by no means.  
 How is this,  
 That men of science, osteologists  
 And surgeons, beat some poets in  
 respect  
 For nature?—count nought common  
 or unequal,  
 Spend raptures upon perfect speci-  
 mens  
 Of indurated veins, distorted joints,  
 Or beautiful new cases of curved  
 spine,  
 While we, we are shocked at nature's  
 falling off,  
 We dare to shrink back from her  
 warts and blains,  
 We will not, when she sneezes, look  
 at her,  
 Not even to say, "God bless her!"  
 That's our wrong:  
 For that, she will not trust us often  
 with  
 Her larger sense of beauty and de-  
 sire,  
 But tethers us to a lily or a rose,  
 And bids us diet on the dew in-  
 side,  
 Left ignorant that the hungry beggar-  
 boy  
 (Who stares unseen against our ab-  
 sent eyes,  
 And wonders at the gods that we  
 must be,  
 To pass so careless for the oranges!)  
 Bears yet a breastful of a fellow-  
 world  
 To this world, undisparaged, unde-  
 spoiled,  
 And (while we scorn him for a flower  
 or two,  
 As being, Heaven help us, less poeti-  
 cal)  
 Contains himself both flowers and  
 firmaments  
 And surging seas and aspectable stars,

And all that we would push him out  
of sight  
In order to see nearer. Let us pray  
God's grace to keep God's image in  
repute,  
That so the poet and philanthropist  
(Even I and Romney) may stand side  
by side,  
Because we both stand face to face  
with men,  
Contemplating the people in the  
rough,  
Yet each so follow a vocation, his  
And mine.

I walked on, musing with myself  
On life and art, and whether after  
all

A larger metaphysics might not help  
Our physics, a completer poetry  
Adjust our daily life and vulgar wants  
More fully than the special outside  
plans,

Phalansteries, material institutes,  
The civil conscriptions, and lay mon-  
asteries  
Preferred by modern thinkers, as  
they thought

The bread of man indeed made all  
his life,  
And washing seven times in the  
"People's Baths"

Were sovereign for a people's lepro-  
sy,  
Still leaving out the essential proph-  
et's word

That comes in power. On which we  
thunder down,

We prophets, poets, — Virtue's in the  
*word!*

The maker burnt the darkness up  
with his,

To inaugurate the use of vocal life;  
And plant a poet's word even deep  
enough

In any man's breast, looking pres-  
ently

For offshoots, you have done more  
for the man

Than if you dressed him in a broad-  
cloth coat,

And warned his Sunday pottage at  
your fire.

Yet Romney leaves me . . .

God! what face is that?  
O Romney, O Marian!

Walking on the quays,  
And pulling thoughts to pieces leis-  
urely,

As if I caught at grasses in a field,

And bit them slow between my ab-  
sent lips,  
And shred them with my hands . . .

What face is that?  
What a face, what a look, what a  
likeness! Full on mine  
The sudden blow of it came down,  
till all

My blood swam, my eyes dazzled,  
then I sprang . . .

It was as if a meditative man  
Were dreaming out a summer after-  
noon,

And watching gnats a-prick upon a  
pond,

When something floats up suddenly,  
out there,

Turns over . . . a dead face, known  
once alive . . .

So old, so new! it would be dreadful  
now

To lose the sight, and keep the doubt  
of this:

He plunges — ha! he has lost it in  
the splash.

I plunged — I tore the crowd up,  
either side,

And rushed on, forward, forward,  
after her.

Her? whom?

A woman sauntered slow in front,  
Munching an apple; she left off  
amazed

As if I had snatched it: that's not  
she, at least.

A man walked arm-linked with a  
lady veiled,

Both heads dropped closer than the  
need of talk:

They started; he forgot her with his  
face,

And she, herself, and clung to him as  
if

My look were fatal. Such a stream  
of folk,

And all with cares and business of  
their own!

I ran the whole quay down against  
their eyes —

No Marian; nowhere Marian. Al-  
most, now,

I could call "Marian, Marian!" with  
the shriek

Of desperate creatures calling for the  
dead.

Where is she, was she? was she any-  
where?

I stood still, breathless, gazing, straining out  
 In every uncertain distance, till at last  
 A gentleman abstracted as myself  
 Came full against me, then resolved the clash  
 In voluble excuses, — obviously  
 Some learned member of the Institute  
 Upon his way there, walking, for his health,  
 While meditating on the last "Discourse;"  
 Pinching the empty air 'twixt finger and thumb,  
 From which the snuff being ousted by that shock  
 Defiled his snow-white waistcoat duly pricked  
 At the button-hole with honorable red;  
 "Madame, your pardon," — there he swerved from me  
 A metre, as confounded as he had heard  
 That Dumas would be chosen to fill up  
 The next chair vacant, by his "*men in us.*"  
 Since when was genius found respectable?  
 It passes in its place, indeed, which means  
 The seventh floor back, or else the hospital.  
 Revolving pistols are ingenious things;  
 But prudent men (academicians are)  
 Scarce keep them in the cupboard next the prunes.

And so, abandoned to a bitter mirth,  
 I loitered to my inn. O world, O world,  
 O jurists, rhymers, dreamers, what you please,  
 We play a weary game of hide-and-seek!  
 We shape a figure of our fantasy,  
 Call nothing something, and run after it  
 And lose it, lose ourselves, too, in the search,  
 Till clash against us comes a somebody  
 Who also has lost something and is lost, —  
 Philosopher against philanthropist,  
 Academician against poet, man

Against woman, against the living the dead —  
 Then home, with a bad headache and worse jest.

To change the water for my heliotropes  
 And yellow roses. Paris has such flowers,  
 But England also. 'Twas a yellow rose,  
 By that south window of the little house,  
 My cousin Romney gathered with his hand  
 On all my birthdays for me, save the last;  
 And then I shook the tree too rough,  
 Too rough,  
 For roses to stay after.

Now, my maps.  
 I must not linger here from Italy  
 Till the last nightingale is tired of song,  
 And the last firefly dies off in the maize.  
 My soul's in haste to leap into the sun,  
 And scorch and seethe itself to a finer mood,  
 Which here in this chill north is apt to stand  
 Too stiffly in former moulds.

That face persists.  
 It floats up, it turns over in my mind  
 As like to Marian as one dead is like  
 The same alive. In very deed a face,  
 And not a fancy, though it vanished so:  
 The small fair face between the darks of hair  
 I used to liken, when I saw her first,  
 To a point of moonlit water down a well;  
 The low brow, the frank space between the eyes,  
 Which always had the brown pathetic look  
 Of a dumb creature, who had been beaten once,  
 And never since was easy with the world.

Ah, ah! now I remember perfectly  
 Those eyes to-day: how overlarge they seemed!  
 As if some patient passionate despair  
 (Like a coal dropt and forgot on tap-estry,

Which slowly burns a widening circle  
 out)  
 Had burnt them larger, larger. And  
 those eyes,  
 To-day, I do remember, saw me too,  
 As I saw them, with conscious lids  
 astrain

In recognition. Now, a fantasy,  
 A simple shade or image of the brain,  
 Is merely passive, does not retroact,  
 Is seen, but sees not.

'Twas a real face,  
 Perhaps a real Marian.

Which being so,  
 I ought to write to Romney, "Mari-  
 an's here :  
 Be comforted for Marian."

My pen fell ;  
 My hands struck sharp together, as  
 hands do  
 Which hold at nothing. Can I write  
 to *him*

A half-truth? can I keep my own  
 soul blind

To the other half . . . the worse?  
 What are our souls,

If still, to run on straight a sober  
 pace,

Nor start at every pebble or dead  
 leaf,

They must wear blinkers, ignore facts,  
 suppress

Six-tenths of the road? Confront the  
 truth, my soul!

And, oh! as truly as that was Mari-  
 an's face,

The arms of that same Marian clasped  
 a thing

. . . Not hid so well beneath the  
 scanty shawl,

I cannot name it now for what it was.

A child. Small business has a cast-  
 away

Like Marian, with that crown of pros-  
 perous wives,

At which the gentlest she grows ar-  
 rogant,

And says, "My child." Who finds  
 an emerald ring

On a beggar's middle finger, and re-  
 quires

More testimony to convict a thief?

A child's too costly for so mere a  
 wretch:

She filched it somewhere; and it  
 means with her,

Instead of honor, blessing, merely  
 shame.

I cannot write to Romney, "Here  
 she is,  
 Here's Marian found! I'll set you on  
 her track.

I saw her here in Paris, . . . and her  
 child.

She put away your love two years  
 ago,

But, plainly, not to starve. You suf-  
 fered then;

And now that you've forgot her ut-  
 terly,

As any last year's annual, in whose  
 place

You've planted a thick flowering  
 evergreen,

I choose, being kind, to write and  
 tell you this

To make you wholly easy, — she's not  
 dead,

But only . . . damned."

Stop there: I go too fast;  
 I'm cruel, like the rest, — in haste to  
 take

The first stir in the arras for a rat,  
 And set my barking, biting thoughts  
 upon't.

— A child! what then? Suppose a  
 neighbor's sick,

And asked her, "Marian, carry out  
 my child

In this spring air," — I punish her  
 for that?

Or say, the child should hold her  
 round the neck

For good child reasons, that he liked  
 it so,

And would not leave her, — she had  
 winning ways, —

I brand her, therefore, that she took  
 the child?

Not so.

I will not write to Romney Leigh,  
 For now he's happy, and she may,  
 indeed,

Be guilty, and the knowledge of her  
 fault

Would draggle his smooth time. But  
 I, whose days

Are not so fine they cannot bear the  
 rain,

And who, moreover, having seen her  
 face,

Must see it again . . . will see it, by  
 my hopes

Of one day seeing heaven too. The  
 police

Shall track her, hound her, ferret  
 their own soil:



“Marian! I find you. Shall I let you go?”—Page 107.

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We'll dig this Paris to its catacombs  
But certainly we'll find her, have her  
out,  
And save her, if she will or will not,  
child  
Or no child, — if a child, then one to  
save!

The long weeks passed on without  
consequence.

As easy find a footstep on the sand  
The morning after spring-tide, as the  
trace

Of Marian's feet between the incen-  
sant surfs

Of this live flood. She may have  
moved this way;

But so the star-fish does, and crosses  
out

The dent of her small shoe. The  
foiled police

Renounced me. "Could they find a  
girl and child,

No other signalment but girl and  
child?

No data shown but noticeable eyes,  
And hair in masses, low upon the brow,  
As if it were an iron crown, and  
pressed?

Friends heighten, and suppose they  
specify:

Why, girls with hair and eyes are  
everywhere

In Paris; they had turned me up in  
vain,

No Marian Erle indeed, but certainly  
Mathildes, Justines, Victoires . . .

or, if I sought  
The English, Betsies, Saras, by the  
score.

They might as well go out into the  
fields

To find a speckled bean that's some-  
how specked,

And somewhere in the pod." They  
left me so.

Shall I leave Marian? have I dreamed  
a dream?

— I thank God I have found her! I  
must say

"Thank God" for finding her, al-  
though 'tis true

I find the world more sad and wicked  
for't.

But she —

I'll write about her presently.

My hand's a-tremble, as I had just  
caught up

My heart to write with in the place of  
it.

At least you'd take these letters to be  
writ

At sea, in storm! — wait now . . .  
A simple chance

Did all. I could not sleep last night,  
and, tired

Of turning on my pillow and harder  
thoughts,

Went out at early morning, when the  
air

Is delicate with some last starry  
touch,

To wander through the market-place  
of flowers

(The prettiest haunt in Paris), and  
make sure

At worst that there were roses in the  
world.

So wandering, musing, with the art-  
ist's eye,

That keeps the shade-side of the  
thing it loves,

Half-absent, whole observing, while  
the crowd

Of young vivacious and black-braided  
heads

Dipped, quick as finches in a blos-  
somed tree,

Among the nosegays, cheapening this  
and that

In such a cheerful twitter of rapid  
speech, —

My heart leapt in me, startled by a  
voice

That slowly, faintly, with long  
breaths that marked

The interval between the wish and  
word,

Inquired in stranger's French,  
"Would *that* be much,

That branch of flowering mountain-  
gorse?" — "So much?"

Too much for me, then!" turning  
the face round

So close upon me that I felt the sigh  
It turned with.

"Marian, Marian!" — face to face —  
"Marian! I find you. Shall I let you  
go?"

I held her two slight wrists with both  
my hands;

"Ah, Marian, Marian, can I let you  
go?"

She fluttered from me like a cycla-  
men

As white, which, taken in a sudden  
wind,

Beats on against the palisade. "Let  
pass,"  
She said at last. "I will not," I  
replied:

"I lost my sister Marian many days,  
And sought her ever in my walks  
and prayers,

And now I find her . . . do we throw  
away

The bread we worked and prayed for,  
— crumble it

And drop it . . . to do even so by  
thee

Whom still I've hungered after more  
than bread,

My sister Marian? Can I hurt thee,  
dear?

Then why distrust me? Never trem-  
ble so.

Come with me rather, where we'll  
talk and live,

And none shall vex us. I've a home  
for you

And me, and no one else" . . .  
She shook her head.

"A home for you and me and no one  
else

Ill suits one of us: I prefer to such  
A roof of grass on which a flower  
might spring,

Less costly to me than the cheapest  
here;

And yet I could not at this hour af-  
ford

A like home even. That you offer  
yours,

I thank you. You are good as heav-  
en itself—

As good as one I knew before . . .  
Farewell!"

I loosed her hands. "In *his* name  
no farewell!"

(She stood as if I held her.) "For  
his sake,

For his sake,—Romney's! by the  
good he meant,

Ay, always! by the love he pressed  
for once,

And by the grief, reproach, abandon-  
ment,

He took in change" . . .

"He, Romney! who grieved *him*?  
Who had the heart for't? what re-  
proach touched *him*?

Be merciful—speak quickly."

"Therefore come,"  
I answered with authority. "I  
think

We dare to speak such things, and  
name such names.  
In the open squares of Paris."

Not a word  
She said, but in a gentle, humbled way  
(As one who had forgot herself in  
grief)

Turned round, and followed closely  
where I went,

As if I led her by a narrow plank  
Across devouring waters, step by  
step;

And so in silence we walked on a  
mile.

And then she stopped: her face was  
white as wax.

"We go much farther?"  
"You are ill," I asked,

"Or tired?"  
She looked the whiter for her smile.

"There's one at home," she said,  
"has need of me

By this time; and I must not let him  
wait."

"Not even," I asked, "to hear of  
Romney Leigh?"

"Not even," she said, "to hear of  
Mister Leigh."

"In that case," I resumed, "I go  
with you,

And we can talk the same thing there  
as here.

None waits for me: I have my day to  
spend."

Her lips moved in a spasm without a  
sound;

But then she spoke. "It shall be as  
you please,

And better so—'tis shorter seen than  
told;

And, though you will not find me  
worth your pains,

*That*, even, may be worth some pains  
to know

For one as good as you are."

Then she led  
The way; and I, as by a narrow  
plank

Across devouring waters, followed  
her,

Stepping by her footsteps, breathing  
by her breath,

And holding her with eyes that would  
not slip;



And so, without a word, we walked a  
 mile,  
 And so another mile, without a word.  
 Until the peopled streets being all dis-  
 missed,  
 House rows and groups all scattered  
 like a flock,  
 The market-gardens thickened, and  
 the long  
 White walls beyond, like spiders' out-  
 side threads,  
 Stretched, feeling blindly toward the  
 country-fields  
 Through half-built habitations and  
 half-dug  
 Foundations, — intervals of trenchant  
 chalk  
 That bit betwixt the grassy uneven  
 turfs  
 Where goats (vine-tendrils trailing  
 from their mouths)  
 Stood perched on edges of the cellar-  
 age  
 Which should be, staring as about to  
 leap  
 To find their coming Bacchus. All  
 the place  
 Seemed less a cultivation than a  
 waste.  
 Men work here, only, — scarce begin  
 to live:  
 All's sad, the country struggling with  
 the town,  
 Like an untamed hawk upon a strong  
 man's fist.  
 That beats its wings, and tries to get  
 away,  
 And cannot choose be satisfied so  
 soon  
 To hop through court-yards with its  
 right foot tied,  
 The vintage plains and pastoral hills  
 in sight.  
 We stopped beside a house too high  
 and slim  
 To stand there by itself, but waiting  
 till  
 Five others, two on this side, three on  
 that,  
 Should grow up from the sullen see-  
 cond floor  
 They pause at now, to build it to a  
 row.  
 The upper windows partly were un-  
 glazed  
 Meantime, — a meagre, unripe house:  
 a line

Of rigid poplars elbowed it behind;  
 And just in front, beyond the lime  
 and bricks  
 That wronged the grass between it  
 and the road,  
 A great acacia with its slender trunk,  
 And overpoise of multitudinous  
 leaves,  
 (In which a hundred fields might spill  
 their dew  
 And intense verdure, yet find room  
 enough)  
 Stood reconciling all the place with  
 green.

I followed up the stair upon her  
 step.  
 She hurried upward, shot across a  
 face,  
 A woman's, on the landing, — "How  
 now, now!  
 Is no one to have holidays but you?  
 You said an hour, and stay three  
 hours, I think,  
 And Julie waiting for your betters  
 here?  
 Why, if he had waked, he might have  
 waked, for me."  
 — Just murmuring an excusing word,  
 she passed  
 And shut the rest out with the cham-  
 ber-door,  
 Myself shut in beside her.

'Twas a room  
 Scarce larger than a grave, and near  
 as bare, —  
 Two stools, a pallet-bed. I saw the  
 room:  
 A mouse could find no sort of shelter  
 in't,  
 Much less a greater secret; curtain-  
 less, —  
 The window fixed you with its tor-  
 turing eye,  
 Defying you to take a step apart,  
 If, peradventure, you would hide a  
 thing.  
 I saw the whole room, I and Marian  
 there  
 Alone.  
 Alone? She threw her bonnet off,  
 Then, sighing as 'twere sighing the  
 last time,  
 Approached the bed, and drew a  
 shawl away:  
 You could not peel a fruit you fear to  
 bruise  
 More calmly and more carefully than  
 so, —

Nor would you find within, a rosier  
flushed  
Pomegranate —

There he lay upon his back,  
The yearling creature, warm and  
moist with life  
To the bottom of his dimples, — to the  
ends  
Of the lovely tumbled curls about his  
face;  
For since he had been covered over-  
much  
To keep him from the light-glare,  
both his cheeks  
Were hot and scarlet as the first live  
rose  
The shepherd's heart-blood ebb'd  
away into  
The faster for his love. And love  
was here  
As instant: in the pretty baby-month,  
Shut close, as if for dreaming that it  
sucked;  
The little naked feet, drawn up the  
way  
Of nestled birdlings; every thing so  
soft  
And tender, — to the tiny holdfast  
hands,  
Which, closing on a finger into sleep,  
Had kept the mould of't.

While we stood there dumb;  
For oh, that it should take such inno-  
cence  
To prove just guilt, I thought, and  
stood there dumb, —  
The light upon his eyelids pricked  
them wide,  
And staring out at us with all their  
blue,  
As half perplexed between the angel-  
hood  
He had been away to visit in his  
sleep,  
And our most mortal presence, grad-  
ually  
He saw his mother's face, accepting it  
In change for heaven itself with such  
a smile  
As might have well been learnt there,  
never moved,  
But smiled on in a drowse of ecstasy,  
So happy (half with her, and half with  
heaven)  
He could not have the trouble to be  
stirred,  
But smiled and lay there. Like a  
rose, I said?  
As red and still indeed as any rose,

That blows in all the silence of its  
leaves,  
Content, in blowing, to fulfil its life.

She leaned above him (drinking him  
as wine)

In that extremity of love 'twill pass  
For agony or rapture, seeing that love  
Includes the whole of nature, round-  
ing it

To love . . . no more, since more can  
never be

Than just love. Self-forgot, cast out  
of self,

And drowning in the transport of the  
sight,

Her whole pale passionate face,  
month, forehead, eyes,

One gaze she stood; then, slowly as  
he smiled,

She smiled too, slowly, smiling un-  
aware,

And drawing from his countenance  
to hers

A fainter red, as if she watched a  
flame,

And stood in it aglow. "How beau-  
tiful!"

Said she.

I answered, trying to be cold.  
(Must sin have compensations, was  
my thought,

As if it were a holy thing like grief?  
And is a woman to be fooled aside

From putting vice down, with that  
woman's toy,

A baby?) — "Ay! the child is well  
enough,"

I answered. "If his mother's palms  
are clean,

They need be glad, of course, in clasp-  
ing such;

But, if not, I would rather lay my  
hand,

Were I she, on God's brazen altar-  
bars

Red-hot with burning sacrificial  
lambs,

Than touch the sacred curls of such a  
child."

She plunged her fingers in his cluster-  
ing locks

As one who would not be afraid of  
fire;

And then, with indrawn steady utter-  
ance, said,

"My lamb, my lamb! although,  
through such as thou,

The most unclean got courage, and  
approached  
To God, once, now they cannot, even  
with men,  
Find grace enough for pity and gentle  
words."

"My Marian," I made answer, grave  
and sad,

"The priest who stole a lamb to offer  
him

Was still a thief. And if a woman  
steals

(Through God's own barrier-hedges of  
true love,

Which fence out license in securing  
love)

A child like this, that smiles so in her  
face,

She is no mother, but a kidnapper,  
And he's a dismal orphan, not a son,

Whom all her kisses cannot feed so  
full

He will not miss hereafter a pure  
home

To live in, a pure heart to lean  
against,

A pure good mother's name and  
memory

To hope by when the world grows  
thick and bad,

And he feels out for virtue."

"Oh!" she smiled  
With bitter patience, "the child takes  
his chance ;

Not much worse off in being father-  
less

Than I was, fathered. He will say,  
belike,

His mother was the saddest creature  
born ;

He'll say his mother lived so contrary  
To joy, that even the kindest, seeing  
her,

Grew sometimes almost cruel ; he'll  
not say

She flew contrarious in the face of God  
With bat-wings of her vices. Stole  
my child !

My flower of earth, my only flower  
on earth,

My sweet, my beauty !" . . . Up she  
snatched the child,

And, breaking on him in a storm of  
tears,

Drew out her long sobs from their  
shivering roots,

Until he took it for a game, and  
stretched

His feet, and flapped his eager arms  
like wings,

And crowed and gurgled through his  
infant laugh.

"Mine, mine !" she said. "I have as  
sure a right

As any glad proud mother in the  
world,

Who sets her darling down to cut his  
teeth

Upon her church-ring. If she talks  
of law,

I talk of law : I claim my mother-  
dues

By law, — the law which now is para-  
mount ;

The common law, by which the poor  
and weak

Are trodden under foot by vicious  
men,

And loathed forever after by the good.  
Let pass ! I did not filch : I found  
the child."

"You found him, Marian ?"

"Ay, I found him where  
I found my curse, — in the gutter with  
my shame !

What have you, any of you, to say to  
that,

Who all are happy, and sit safe and  
high,

And never spoke before to arraign  
my right

To grief itself ? What, what, . . .  
being beaten down

By hoofs of maddened oxen into a  
ditch,

Half-dead, whole mangled, when a  
girl at last

Breathes, sees . . . and finds there,  
bedded in her flesh,

Because of the extremity of the  
shock,

Some coin of price ! . . . and when a  
good man comes

(That's God ! the best men are not  
quite as good)

And says, 'I dropped the coin there :  
take it, you,

And keep it, it shall pay you for the  
loss,' —

You all put up your finger — 'See the  
thief !

Observe what precious thing she has  
come to filch !

How bad those girls are !' Oh, my  
flower, my pet,

I dare forget I have you in my arms,

And fly off to be angry with the world,  
And fright you, hurt you with my tempers, till  
You double up your lip? Why, that indeed

Is bad : a naughty mother !”  
“ You mistake,”  
I interrupted. “ If I loved you not,  
I should not, Marian, certainly be here.”

“ Alas !” she said, “ you are so very good ;  
And yet I wish, indeed, you had never come  
To make me sob until I vex the child.

It is not wholesome for these pleasure-plats  
To be so early watered by our brine.  
And then who knows? he may not like me now

As well, perhaps, as ere he saw me fret :

One’s ugly fretting. He has eyes the same

As angels, but he cannot see as deep ;  
And so I’ve kept forever in his sight  
A sort of smile to please him, as you place

A green thing from the garden in a cup

To make believe it grows there. Look, my sweet,

My cowslip-ball ! we’ve done with that cross face,

And here’s the face come back you used to like.

Ah, ah ! he laughs : he likes me. Ah ! Miss Leigh,

You’re great and pure ; but were you purer still, —

As if you had walked, we’ll say no otherwhere

Than up and down the New Jerusalem,

And held your trailing lutestring up yourself

From brushing the twelve stones, for fear of some

Small speck as little as a needle-prick,

White stitched on white, — the child would keep to me,

Would choose his poor lost Marian, like me best,

And, though you stretched your arms, cry back and cling,

As we do when God says it’s time to die

And bids us go up higher. Leave us, then :

We two are happy. Does *he* push me off ?

He’s satisfied with me, as I with him.”

“ So soft to one, so hard to others ! Nay,”

I cried, more angry that she melted me,

“ We make henceforth a cushion of our faults

To sit and practise easy virtues on ?  
I thought a child was given to sanctify

A woman, — set her, in the sight of all

The clear-eyed heavens, a chosen minister

To do their business, and lead spirits up  
The difficult blue heights. A woman lives

Not bettered, quickened toward the truth and good

Through being a mother ? . . . Then she’s none, although

She damps her baby’s cheeks by kissing them,

As we kill roses.”

“ Kill ! O Christ !” she said,  
And turned her wild, sad face from side to side

With most despairing wonder in it.

“ What, what have you in your souls against me then,

All of you? Am I wicked, do you think ?

God knows me, trusts me with the child — but you,

You think me really wicked ?”

“ Complaisant,”

I answered softly, “ to a wrong you’ve done,

Because of certain profits, which is wrong

Beyond the first wrong, Marian. When you left

The pure place and the noble heart to take

The hand of a seducer” . . .

“ Whom? whose hand ?  
I took the hand of” . . .

Springing up erect,  
And lifting up the child at full arm’s-length,

As if to bear him like an oriflamme  
Unconquerable to armies of reproach,—

“By *him*,” she said, “my child’s  
head and its curls,  
By these blue eyes no woman born  
could dare

A perjury on, I make my mother’s  
oath,

That if I left that heart to lighten it,  
The blood of mine was still, except  
for grief!

No cleaner maid than I was took a  
step

To a sadder end,—no matron-mother  
now  
Looks backward to her early maiden-  
hood

Through chaster pulses. I speak  
steadily;

And if I lie so . . . if, being fouled in  
will

And paltered with in soul by devil’s  
lust,

I dared to bid this angel take my  
part . . .

Would God sit quiet, let us think, in  
heaven,

Nor strike me dumb with thunder?  
Yet I speak:

He clears me therefore. What, ‘seduced’  
’s your word?

Do wolves seduce a wandering fawn  
in France?

Do eagles, who have pinched a lamb  
with claws,

Seduce it into carrion? So with me.  
I was not ever, as you say, seduced,  
But simply murdered.”

There she paused, and sighed,  
With such a sigh as drops from agony

To exhaustion,—sighing while she  
let the babe

Slide down upon her bosom from her  
arms,

And all her face’s light fell after  
him

Like a torch quenched in falling.  
Down she sank,

And sate upon the bedside with the  
child.

But I, convicted, broken utterly,  
With woman’s passion clung about  
her waist,

And kissed her hair and eyes,—“I  
have been wrong,

Sweet Marian” . . . (weeping in a  
tender rage),

“Sweet, holy Marian! And now,  
Marian, now,

I’ll use your oath, although my lips  
are hard,

And by the child, my Marian, by the  
child,

I swear his mother shall be inno-  
cent

Before my conscience, as in the open  
Book

Of Him who reads for judgment. In-  
nocent,

My sister! Let the night be ne’er so  
dark,

The moon is surely somewhere in the  
sky:

So surely is your whiteness to be  
found

Through all dark facts. But pardon,  
pardon me,

And smile a little, Marian,—for the  
child,

If not for me, my sister.”

The poor lip  
Just motioned for the smile, and let it  
go;

And then, with scarce a stirring of  
the mouth,

As if a statue spoke that could not  
breathe,

But spoke on calm between its marble  
lips,—

“I’m glad, I’m very glad, you clear  
me so.

I should be sorry that you set me  
down

With harlots, or with even a better  
name

Which misbecomes his mother. For  
the rest,

I am not on a level with your love,  
Nor ever was, you know, but now

am worse,  
Because that world of yours has dealt  
with me

As when the hard sea bites and chews  
a stone,

And changes the first form of it. I’ve  
marked

A shore of pebbles bitten to one  
shape

From all the various life of madre-  
pores;

And so that little stone called Mar-  
ian Erle,

Picked up and dropped by you and  
another friend,

Was ground and tortured by the in-  
cessant sea,

And bruised from what she was, —  
 changed! death's a change,  
 And she, I said, was murdered: Mar-  
 ian's dead.  
 What can you do with people when  
 they are dead,  
 But, if you are pious, sing a hymn  
 and go,  
 Or, if you are tender, heave a sigh and  
 go,  
 But go by all means, and permit  
 the grass  
 To keep its green feud up 'twixt them  
 and you?  
 Then leave me, — let me rest. I'm  
 dead, I say.  
 And if, to save the child from death  
 as well,  
 The mother in me has survived the  
 rest,  
 Why, that's God's miracle you must  
 not tax,  
 I'm not less dead for that: I'm noth-  
 ing more  
 But just a mother. Only for the  
 child  
 I'm warm, and cold, and hungry, and  
 afraid,  
 And smell the flowers a little, and see  
 the sun,  
 And speak still, and am silent, — just  
 for him!  
 I pray you therefore to mistake me  
 not,  
 And treat me haply as I were alive;  
 For, though you ran a pin into my  
 soul,  
 I think it would not hurt nor trouble  
 me.  
 Here's proof, dear lady, — in the mar-  
 ket-place  
 But now, you promised me to say a  
 word  
 About . . . a friend, who once, long  
 years ago,  
 Took God's place toward me, when  
 he leans and loves,  
 And does not thunder . . . whom at  
 last I left,  
 As all of us leave God. You thought  
 perhaps  
 I seemed to care for hearing of that  
 friend?  
 Now judge me! We have sate here  
 half an hour  
 And talked together of the child and  
 me,  
 And I not asked as much as 'What's  
 the thing

You had to tell me of the friend . . .  
 the friend?'  
 He's sad, I think you said, — he's sick  
 perhaps?  
 'Tis nought to Marian if he's sad or  
 sick.  
 Another would have crawled beside  
 your foot,  
 And prayed your words out. Why, a  
 beast, a dog,  
 A starved cat, if he had fed it once  
 with milk,  
 Would show less hardness. But I'm  
 dead, you see,  
 And that explains it."  
 Poor, poor thing, she spoke  
 And shook her head, as white and  
 calm as frost  
 On days too cold for raining any  
 more,  
 But still with such a face, so much  
 alive,  
 I could not choose but take it on my  
 arm,  
 And stroke the placid patience of its  
 cheeks,  
 Then told my story out, of Romney  
 Leigh, —  
 How, having lost her, sought her,  
 missed her still,  
 He, broken-hearted for himself and  
 her,  
 Had drawn the curtains of the world  
 awhile  
 As if he had done with morning.  
 There I stopped;  
 For when she gasped, and pressed me  
 with her eyes,  
 "And now . . . how is it with him?  
 tell me now,"  
 I felt the shame of compensated  
 grief,  
 And chose my words with scruple —  
 slowly stepped  
 Upon the slippery stones set here and  
 there  
 Across the sliding water. "Certainly,  
 As evening empties morning into  
 night,  
 Another morning takes the evening  
 up  
 With healthful, providential inter-  
 change;  
 And though he thought still of  
 her" —  
 "Yes, she knew,  
 She understood: she had supposed,  
 indeed,  
 That as one stops a hole upon a flute.

At which a new note comes and  
 shapes the tune,  
 Excluding her would bring a worthier  
 in,  
 And, long ere this, that Lady Walde-  
 mar

He loved so" . . .  
 "Loved!" I started — "loved her so!  
 Now tell me" . . .

"I will tell you," she replied:  
 "But, since we're taking oaths, you'll  
 promise first

That he in England, he, shall never  
 learn

In what a dreadful trap his creature  
 here,

Round whose unworthy neck he had  
 meant to tie

The honorable ribbon of his name,  
 Fell unaware, and came to butchery:  
 Because, — I know him, — as he takes  
 to heart

The grief of every stranger, he's not  
 like

To banish mine as far as I should  
 choose

In wishing him most happy. Now he  
 leaves

To think of me, perverse, who went  
 my way,

Unkind, and left him; but if once he  
 knew . . .

Ah, then, the sharp nail of my cruel  
 wrong

Would fasten me forever in his sight,  
 Like some poor curious bird, through  
 each spread wing

Nailed high up over a fierce hunter's  
 fire,

To spoil the dinner of all tenderer  
 folk

Come in by chance. Nay, since your  
 Marian's dead,

You shall not hang her up, but dig a  
 hole,

And bury her in silence; ring no  
 bells."

I answered gayly, though my whole  
 voice wept,

"We'll ring the joy-bells, not the  
 funeral-bells,

Because we have her back, dead or  
 alive."

She never answered that, but shook  
 her head;

Then low and calm, as one who, safe  
 in heaven,

Shall tell a story of his lower life,  
 Unmoved by shame or anger, so she  
 spoke.

She told me she had loved upon her  
 knees,

As others pray, more perfectly ab-  
 sorbed

In the act and inspiration. She felt  
 his

For just his uses, not her own at  
 all,

His stool, to sit on or put up his  
 foot;

His cup, to fill with wine or vinegar,  
 Whichever drink might please him at  
 the chance,

For that should please her always;  
 let him write

His name upon her . . . it seemed  
 natural:

It was most precious, standing on his  
 shelf,

To wait until he chose to lift his  
 hand.

Well, well, — I saw her then, and  
 must have seen

How bright her life went floating on  
 her love,

Like wicks the housewives send afloat  
 on oil

Which feeds them to a flame that  
 lasts the night.

To do good seemed so much his busi-  
 ness,

That having done it she was fain to  
 think

Must fill up his capacity for joy.  
 At first she never mooted with her-  
 self

If *he* was happy, since he made her  
 so;

Or if he loved her, being so much be-  
 loved.

Who thinks of asking if the sun is  
 light,

Observing that it lightens? who's so  
 bold,

To question God of his felicity?  
 Still less. And thus she took for  
 granted first

What, first of all, she should have put  
 to proof,

And sinned against him so, but only  
 so.

"What could you hope," she said.  
 "of such as she?"

You take a kid you like, and turn it  
 out

In some fair garden : though the creature's fond  
 And gentle, it will leap upon the beds,  
 And break your tulips, bite your tender trees :  
 The wonder would be if such innocence  
 Spoiled less. A garden is no place for kids."

And by degrees, when he who had chosen her  
 Brought in his courteous and benignant friends  
 To spend their goodness on her, which she took

So very gladly, as a part of his, —  
 By slow degrees it broke on her slow sense,

That she, too, in that Eden of delight  
 Was out of place, and, like the silly kid,  
 Still did most mischief where she meant most love.

A thought enough to make a woman mad,  
 (No beast in this but she may well go mad)

That saying " I am thine to love and use "

May blow the plague in her protesting breath

To the very man for whom she claims to die :

That, clinging round his neck, she pulls him down

And drowns him ; and that, lavishing her soul,

She hales perdition on him. " So, being mad,"

Said Marian . . .

" Ah ! who stirred such thoughts," you ask ?

" Whose fault it was that she should have such thoughts ?

None's fault, none's fault. The light comes, and we see :

But if it were not truly for our eyes,  
 There would be nothing seen for all the light :

And so with Marian. If she saw at last,

The sense was in her : Lady Waldemar

Had spoken all in vain else."

" O my heart,  
 O prophet in my heart ! " I cried aloud.

" Then Lady Waldemar spoke ! "

" Did she speak ? "

Mused Marian softly, " or did she only sign ?

Or did she put a word into her face

And look, and so impress you with the word ?

Or leave it in the foldings of her gown,

Like rosemary smells a movement will shake out

When no one's conscious ? Who shall say, or guess ?

One thing alone was certain, — from the day

The gracious lady paid a visit first,  
 She, Marian, saw things different,

— felt distrust

Of all that sheltering roof of circumstance

Her hopes were building into with clay nests :

Her heart was restless, pacing up and down,

And fluttering, like dumb creatures before storms,

Not knowing wherefore she was ill at ease."

" And still the lady came," said Marian Erle, —

" Much oftener than *he* knew it, Mister Leigh.

She bade me never tell him she had come,

She liked to love me better than he knew :

So very kind was Lady Waldemar.

And every time she brought with her more light,

And every light made sorrow clearer . . . Well,

Ah, well ! we cannot give her blame for that :

'Twould be the same thing if an angel came,

Whose right should prove our wrong. And every time

The lady came she looked more beautiful,

And spoke more like a flute among green trees,

Until at last, as one, whose heart being sad

On hearing lovely music, suddenly

Dissolves in weeping, I brake out in tears

Before her, asked her counsel, — ' Had I erred



In being too happy? would she set  
me straight?  
For she, being wise and good, and  
born above  
The flats I had never climbed from,  
could perceive  
If such as I might grow upon the hills,  
And whether such poor herb sufficed  
to grow  
For Romney Leigh to break his fast  
upon't;  
Or would he pine on such, or haply  
starve?  
She wrapt me in her generous arms at  
once,  
And let me dream a moment how it  
feels  
To have a real mother, like some  
girls;  
But, when I looked, her face was  
younger . . . ay,  
Youth's too bright not to be a little  
hard,  
And beauty keeps itself still upper-  
most,  
That's true! Though Lady Walde-  
mar was kind,  
She hurt me, hurt, as if the morning-  
sun  
Should smite us on the eyelids when  
we sleep,  
And wake us up with headache. Ay,  
and soon  
Was light enough to make my heart  
ache too.  
She told me truths I asked for,—  
'twas my fault,—  
'That Romney could not love me, if  
he would,  
As men call loving: there are bloods  
that flow  
Together, like some rivers, and not  
mix,  
Through contraries of nature. He,  
indeed,  
Was set to wed me, to espouse my  
class,  
Act out a rash opinion; and, once  
wed,  
So just a man and gentle could not  
choose  
But make my life as smooth as mar-  
riage-ring,  
Bespeak me mildly, keep me a cheer-  
ful house,  
With servants, brooches, all the flow-  
ers I liked,  
And pretty dresses, silk the whole  
year round' . . .

At which I stopped her,— 'This for  
me. And now  
For *him*?' She hesitated,— truth  
grew hard;  
She owned 'Twas plain a man like  
Romney Leigh  
Required a wife more level to him-  
self.  
If day by day he had to bend his  
height  
To pick up sympathies, opinions,  
thoughts,  
And interchange the common talk of  
life,  
Which helps a man to live, as well as  
talk,  
His days were heavily taxed. Who  
buys a staff  
To fit the hand, that reaches but the  
knee?  
He'd feel it bitter to be forced to miss  
The perfect joy of married suited  
pairs,  
Who, bursting through the separating  
hedge  
Of personal dues with that sweet eg-  
lantine  
Of equal love, keep saying, "So *we*  
think,  
It strikes *us*, that's *our* fancy."—  
When I asked  
If earnest will, devoted love, em-  
ployed  
In youth like mine, would fail to  
raise me up,  
As two strong arms will always raise  
a child  
To a fruit hung overhead, she sighed  
and sighed . . .  
'That could not be,' she feared. 'You  
take a pink,  
You dig about its roots, and water it,  
And so improve it to a garden-pink,  
But will not change it to a helio-  
trope:  
The kind remains. And then the  
harder truth,—  
This Romney Leigh, so rash to leap a  
pale,  
So bold for conscience, quick for mar-  
tyrdom,  
Would suffer steadily and never  
flinch,  
But suffer surely and keenly, when  
his class  
Turned shoulder on him for a shame-  
ful match,  
And set him up as ninepin in their  
talk

To bowl him down with jestings.'  
 There she paused,  
 And when I used the pause in doubt-  
 ing that  
 We wronged him, after all, in what  
 we feared —  
 'Suppose such things could never  
 touch him more  
 In his high conscience (if the things  
 should be,) —  
 Than, when the queen sits in an up-  
 per room,  
 The horses in the street can spatter  
 her!' —  
 A moment, hope came; but the lady  
 closed  
 That door, and nicked the lock, and  
 shut it out,  
 Observing wisely, that 'the tender  
 heart  
 Which made him over-soft to a lower  
 class  
 Would scarcely fail to make him sen-  
 sitive  
 To a higher, — how they thought, and  
 what they felt.'

"Alas, alas!" said Marian, rocking  
 slow  
 The pretty baby who was near asleep,  
 The eyelids creeping over the blue  
 balls, —  
 "She made it clear, too clear: I saw  
 the whole.  
 And yet who knows if I had seen my  
 way  
 Straight out of it by looking, though  
 'twas clear,  
 Unless the generous lady, 'ware of  
 this,  
 Had set her own house all a-fire for me  
 To light me forwards? Leaning on  
 my face  
 Her heavy agate eyes, which crushed  
 my will,  
 She told me tenderly, (as when men  
 come  
 To a bedside to tell people they must  
 die)  
 'She knew of knowledge, — ay, of  
 knowledge knew,  
 That Romney Leigh had loved *her*  
 formerly.  
 And *she* loved *him*, she might say,  
 now the chance  
 Was past. But that, of course, he  
 never guessed,  
 For something came between them, —  
 something thin

As a cobweb, catching every fly of  
 doubt  
 To hold it buzzing at the window-  
 pane,  
 And help to dim the daylight. Ah,  
 man's pride  
 Or woman's, — which is greatest?  
 most averse  
 To brushing cobwebs? Well, but she  
 and he  
 Remained fast friends: it seemed not  
 more than so,  
 Because he had bound his hands, and  
 could not stir.  
 An honorable man, if somewhat rash;  
 And she — not even for Romney  
 would she spill  
 A blot, as little even as a tear . . .  
 Upon his marriage-contract, — not to  
 gain  
 A better joy for two than came by  
 that;  
 For, though I stood between her  
 heart and heaven,  
 She loved me wholly."

Did I laugh, or curse?  
 I think I sat there silent, hearing  
 all,  
 Ay, hearing double, — Marian's tale,  
 at once,  
 And Romney's marriage-vow, "*I'll  
 keep to THEE,*"  
 Which means that woman-serpent.  
 Is it time  
 For church now?  
 "Lady Waldemar spoke more,"  
 Continued Marian; "but as when a  
 soul  
 Will pass out through the sweetness  
 of a song  
 Beyond it, voyaging the uphill road,  
 Even so mine wandered from the  
 things I heard  
 To those I suffered. It was afterward  
 I shaped the resolution to the act.  
 For many hours we talked. What  
 need to talk?  
 The fate was clear and close; it  
 touched my eyes;  
 But still the generous lady tried to  
 keep  
 The case afloat, and would not let it  
 go,  
 And argued, struggled upon Marian's  
 side,  
 Which was not Romney's, though she  
 little knew  
 What ugly monster would take up  
 the end, —

What griping death within the  
drowning death  
Was ready to complete my sum of  
death."

I thought, — Perhaps he's sliding now  
the ring  
Upon that woman's finger . . .

She went on:  
"The lady, failing to prevail her way,  
Ungathered my torn wishes from  
the ground,  
And pieced them with her strong be-  
nevolence;  
And as I thought I could breathe  
freer air

Away from England, going without  
pause,

Without farewell, just breaking with  
a jerk

The blossomed offshoot from my  
thorny life,

She promised kindly to provide the  
means,

With instant passage to the colonies  
And full protection, 'would commit  
me straight

To one who had once been her wait-  
ing-maid,

And had the customs of the world,  
intent

On changing England for Australia  
Herself, to carry out her fortune so.'

For which I thanked the Lady Wal-  
demar,

As men upon their death-beds thank  
last friends

Who lay the pillow straight: it is not  
much,

And yet 'tis all of which they are ca-  
pable, —

This lying smoothly in a bed to die.

And so, 'twas fixed; and so, from  
day to day,

The woman named came in to visit  
me."

Just then the girl stopped speaking,  
sate' erect,

And stared at me as if I had been a  
ghost,

(Perhaps I looked as white as any  
ghost)

With large-eyed horror. "Does God  
make," she said,

"All sorts of creatures really, do you  
think?

Or is it that the Devil slavers them  
So excellently, that we come to doubt

Who's stronger, — he who makes, or  
he who mars?

I never liked the woman's face, or  
voice,

Or ways: it made me blush to look at  
her;

It made me tremble if she touched my  
hand;

And when she spoke a fondling word,  
I shrank

As if one hated me who had power  
to hurt;

And, every time she came, my veins  
ran cold,

As somebody were walking on my  
grave.

At last I spoke to Lady Waldemar:  
'Could such a one be good to trust?'

I asked.

Whereat the lady stroked my cheek,  
and laughed

Her silver laugh (one must be born  
to laugh

To put such music in it), — 'Foolish  
girl,

Your scattered wits are gathering wool  
beyond

The sheep-walk reaches! — leave the  
thing to me.'

And therefore, half in trust, and half  
in scorn

That I had heart still for another fear  
In such a safe despair, I left the thing.

"The rest is short. I was obedient:

I wrote my letter which delivered *him*  
From Marian to his own prosperities,

And followed that bad guide. The  
lady? — hush,

I never blame the lady. Ladies who  
Sit high, however willing to look

down,  
Will scarce see lower than their dain-  
ty feet;

And Lady Waldemar saw less than I,  
With what a Devil's daughter I went

forth  
Along the swine's road, down the  
precipice,

In such a curl of hell-foam caught  
and choked,

No shriek of soul in anguish could  
pierce through

To fetch some help. They say there's  
help in heaven

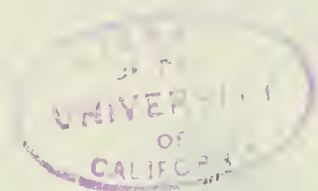
For all such cries. But if one cries  
from hell . . .

What then? — the heavens are deaf  
upon that side.

<p>         "A woman . . . hear me, let me          make it plain . . .          A woman . . . not a monster . . .          both her breasts          Made right to suckle babes . . . she          took me off          A woman also, young and ignorant,          And heavy with my grief, my two          poor eyes          Near washed away with weeping, till          the trees,          The blessed unaccustomed trees and          fields          Ran either side the train like stranger          dogs          Unworthy of any notice, — took me off          So dull, so blind, so only half alive,          Not seeing by what road, nor by what          ship,          Nor toward what place, nor to what          end of all.          Men carry a corpse thus, — past the          doorway, past          The garden-gate, the children's play-          ground, up          The green lane, — then they leave it          in the pit,          To sleep and find corruption, cheek          to cheek          With him who stinks since Friday.          "But suppose:          To go down with one's soul into the          grave,          To go down half dead, half alive, I          say,          And wake up with corruption . . .          cheek to cheek          With him who stinks since Friday!          There it is,          And that's the horror of't, Miss Leigh.          "You feel?          You understand? — no, do not look          at me,          But understand. The blank, blind          weary way          Which led, where'er it led, away at          least;          The shifted ship . . . to Sydney, or to          France,          Still bound, wherever else, to another          land;          The swooning sickness on the dismal          sea,          The foreign shore, the shameful          house, the night,          The feeble blood, the heavy-headed          grief . . .          No need to bring their damnable          drugged cup,       </p>	<p>         And yet they brought it. Hell's so          prodigal          Of Devil's gifts, hunts liberally in          packs,          Will kill no poor small creature of          the wilds          But fifty red wide throats must smoke          at it,          As ins at me . . . when waking up          at last . . .          I told you that I waked up in the          grave.            "Enough so! — it is plain enough so.          True,          We wretches cannot tell out all our          wrong          Without offence to decent happy          folk.          I know that we must scrupulously          hint          With half-words, delicate reserves,          the thing          Which no one scrupled we should          feel in full.          Let pass the rest, then; only leave          my oath          Upon this sleeping child, — man's vio-          lence,          Not man's seduction, made me what          I am,          As lost as . . . I told <i>him</i> I should be          lost.          When mothers fail us, can we help          ourselves?          That's fatal! And you call it being          lost,          That down came next day's noon, and          caught me there          Half gibbering and half raving on          the floor,          And wondering what had happened          up in heaven,          That suns should dare to shine when          God himself          Was certainly abolished.          "I was mad,          How many weeks I know not, —          many weeks.          I think they let me go when I was          mad:          They feared my eyes, and loosed me,          as boys might          A mad dog which they had tortured.          Up and down          I went, by road and village, over          tracts          Of open foreign country, large and          strange,       </p>
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“ And there I sate, one evening by the road,  
I, Marian Erle.” — Page 121.



Crossed everywhere by long, thin  
 poplar-lines  
 Like fingers of some ghastly ske'eton  
 hand  
 Through sunlight and through moon-  
 light evermore  
 Pushed out from hell itself to pluck  
 me back,  
 And resolute to get me, slow and sure;  
 While every roadside Christ upon his  
 cross  
 Hung reddening through his gory  
 wounds at me,  
 And shook his nails in anger, and  
 came down  
 To follow a mile after, wading up  
 The low vines and green wheat, cry-  
 ing, "Take the girl!  
 She's none of mine from henceforth."  
 Then I knew  
 (But this is somewhat dimmer than  
 the rest)  
 The charitable peasants gave me bread,  
 And leave to sleep in straw; and  
 twice they tied,  
 At parting, Mary's image round my  
 neck.  
 How heavy it seemed!—as heavy as  
 a stone;  
 A woman has been strangled with  
 less weight:  
 I threw it in a ditch to keep it clean,  
 And ease my breath a little, when  
 none looked:  
 I did not need such safeguards: brutal  
 men  
 Stopped short, Miss Leigh, in insult,  
 when they had seen  
 My face, — I must have had an awful  
 look.  
 And so I lived: the weeks passed on,  
 — I lived.  
 'Twas living my old tramp-life o'er  
 again,  
 But this time in a dream, and hunted  
 round  
 By some prodigious dream-fear at my  
 back,  
 Which ended yet: my brain cleared  
 presently;  
 And there I sate, one evening, by the  
 road,  
 I, Marian Erle, myself, alone, undone,  
 Facing a sunset low upon the flats  
 As if it were the finish of all time,  
 The great red stone upon my sepul-  
 chre,  
 Which angels were too weak to roll  
 away.

## SEVENTH BOOK.

"THE woman's motive? shall we  
 danb ourselves  
 With finding roots for nettles? 'tis  
 soft clay,  
 And easily explored. She had the  
 means,  
 The moneys, by the lady's liberal  
 grace,  
 In trust for that Australian scheme  
 and me,  
 Which so, that she might clutch with  
 both her hands,  
 And chink to her naughty uses un-  
 disturbed,  
 She served me (after all it was not  
 strange:  
 'Twas only what my mother would  
 have done)  
 A motherly, right damnable good  
 turn.

"Well, after. There are nettles  
 everywhere;  
 But smooth green grasses are more  
 common still:  
 The blue of heaven is larger than the  
 clond.  
 A miller's wife at Clichy took me in,  
 And spent her pity on me,—made  
 me calm,  
 And merely very reasonably sad.  
 She found me a servant's place in  
 Paris, where  
 I tried to take the cast-off life again,  
 And stood as quiet as a beaten ass,  
 Who, having fallen through overloads,  
 stands up  
 To let them charge him with another  
 pack.

"A few months, so. My mistress,  
 young and light,  
 Was easy with me, less for kindness  
 than  
 Because she led, herself, an easy  
 time  
 Betwixt her lover and her looking-  
 glass,  
 Scaree knowing which way she was  
 praised the most.  
 She felt so pretty and so pleased all  
 day,  
 She could not take the trouble to be  
 cross,  
 But sometimes, as I stooped to tie her  
 shoe,

Would tap me softly with her slender  
 foot,  
 Still restless with the last night's  
 dancing in't,  
 And say, 'Fie, pale-face! Are you  
 English girls  
 All grave and silent? mass-book still,  
 and Lent?  
 And first-communion pallor on your  
 cheeks,  
 Worn past the time for't? Little fool,  
 be gay!  
 At which she vanished, like a fairy,  
 through  
 A gap of silver laughter.  
 "Came an hour  
 When all went otherwise. She did  
 not speak,  
 But clinched her brows, and clipped  
 me with her eyes  
 As if a viper with a pair of tongs,  
 Too far for any touch, yet near enough  
 To view the writhing creature, — then  
 at last,  
 'Stand still there, in the holy Vir-  
 gin's name,  
 Thou Marian: thou'rt no reputable  
 girl,  
 Although sufficient dull for twenty  
 saints!  
 I think thou mock'st me and my  
 house,' she said;  
 'Confess thou'lt be a mother in a  
 month,  
 Thou mask of saintship.'  
 "Could I answer her?  
 The light broke in so. It meant *that*,  
 then, *that*?  
 I had not thought of that, in all my  
 thoughts,  
 Through all the cold numb aching of  
 my brow,  
 Through all the heaving of impatient  
 life  
 Which threw me on death at inter-  
 vals; through all  
 The upbreak of the fountains of my  
 heart  
 The rains had swelled too large. It  
 could mean *that*?  
 Did God make mothers out of victims,  
 then,  
 And set such pure amens to hideous  
 deeds?  
 Why not? He overblows an ugly  
 grave  
 With violets which blossom in the  
 spring.  
 And *I* could be a mother in a month?

I hope it was not wicked to be glad.  
 I lifted up my voice and wept, and  
 laughed —  
 To heaven, not her — until it tore my  
 throat.  
 'Confess, confess!' What was there  
 to confess,  
 Except man's cruelty, except my  
 wrong?  
 Except this anguish, or this ecstasy?  
 This shame or glory? The light wo-  
 man there  
 Was small to take it in: an acorn-cup  
 Would take the sea in sooner.  
 " 'Good!' she cried:  
 'Unmarried and a mother, and she  
 laughs!  
 These unchaste girls are always im-  
 pudent.  
 Get out, intriguer! Leave my house,  
 and trot!  
 I wonder you should look me in the  
 face,  
 With such a filthy secret.'  
 "Then I rolled  
 My scanty bundle up, and went my  
 way,  
 Washed white with weeping, shud-  
 dering, head and foot,  
 With blind, hysteric passion, stagger-  
 ing forth  
 Beyond those doors. 'Twas natural,  
 of course,  
 She should not ask me where I meant  
 to sleep;  
 I might sleep well beneath the heavy  
 Seine,  
 Like others of my sort: the bed was  
 laid  
 For us. But any woman, womanly,  
 Had thought of him who should be in  
 a month,  
 The sinless babe that should be in a  
 month,  
 And if by chance he might be warmer  
 housed  
 Than underneath such dreary drip-  
 ping eaves."  
 I broke on Marian there. "Yet she  
 herself,  
 A wife, I think, had scandals of her  
 own,  
 A lover not her husband."  
 "Ay," she said;  
 "But gold and meal are measured  
 otherwise:  
 I learnt so much at school," said  
 Marian Erle.



“O crooked world,” I cried, “ridiculous,  
 If not so lamentable! ’Tis the way  
 With these light women of a thrifty  
 vice,  
 My Marian, — always hard upon the  
 rent  
 In any sister’s virtue! while they  
 keep  
 Their own so darned and patched  
 with perfidy,  
 That, though a rag itself, it looks as  
 well  
 Across a street, in balcony or coach,  
 As any perfect stuff might. For my  
 part,  
 I’d rather take the wind-side of the  
 stews  
 Than touch such women with my fin-  
 ger-end!  
 They top the poor street-walker by  
 their lie,  
 And look the better for being so much  
 worse:  
 The Devil’s most devilish when re-  
 spectable.  
 But you, dear, and your story.”

“All the rest  
 Is here,” she said, and signed upon  
 the child.  
 “I found a mistress-seamstress who  
 was kind,  
 And let me sew in peace among her  
 girls.  
 And what was better than to draw  
 the threads  
 All day and half the night for him  
 and him?  
 And so I lived for him, and so he  
 lives;  
 And so I know, by this time, God  
 lives too.”

She smiled beyond the sun, and ended  
 so,  
 And all my soul rose up to take her  
 part  
 Against the world’s successes, vir-  
 tues, fames.  
 “Come with me, sweetest sister,” I  
 returned,  
 “And sit within my house and do me  
 good  
 From henceforth, thou and thine! ye  
 are my own  
 From henceforth. I am lonely in the  
 world,  
 And thou art lonely, and the child is  
 half

An orphan. Come; and henceforth  
 thou and I,  
 Being still together, will not miss a  
 friend,  
 Nor he a father, since two mothers  
 shall  
 Make that up to him. I am journey-  
 ing south,  
 And in my Tuscan home I’ll find a  
 niche  
 And set thee there, my saint, the  
 child and thee,  
 And burn the lights of love before  
 thy face,  
 And ever at thy sweet look cross my-  
 self  
 From mixing with the world’s pros-  
 perities;  
 That so, in gravity and holy calm,  
 We two may live on toward the truer  
 life.”

She looked me in the face and an-  
 swered not,  
 Nor signed she was unworthy, nor  
 gave thanks,  
 But took the sleeping child, and held  
 it out  
 To meet my kiss, as if requiting me  
 And trusting me at once. And thus,  
 at once,  
 I carried him and her to where I live:  
 She’s there now, in the little room,  
 asleep,  
 I hear the soft child-breathing through  
 the door;  
 And all three of us, at to-morrow’s  
 break,  
 Pass onward, homeward, to our Italy.  
 O Romney Leigh! I have your debts  
 to pay,  
 And I’ll be just and pay them.

But yourself!  
 To pay your debts is scarcely difficult;  
 To buy your life is nearly impossi-  
 ble,  
 Being sold away to Lamia. My head  
 aches;  
 I cannot see my road along this dark;  
 Nor can I creep and grope, as fits the  
 dark,  
 For these foot-catching robes of wo-  
 manhood:  
 A man might walk a little . . . but  
 I! — He loves  
 The Lamia-woman, — and I write to  
 him  
 What stops his marriage, and destroys  
 his peace,

Or what perhaps shall simply trouble  
 him,  
 Until she only need to touch his  
 sleeve  
 With just a finger's tremulous white  
 flame,  
 Saying, "Ah, Aurora Leigh! a pretty  
 tale,  
 A very pretty poet! I can guess  
 The motive,"—then, to catch his  
 eyes in hers  
 And vow she does not wonder, and  
 they two  
 To break in laughter, as the sea along  
 A melancholy coast, and float up  
 higher,  
 In such a laugh, their fatal weeds of  
 love!  
 Ay, fatal, ay. And who shall answer  
 me  
 Fate has not hurried tides, and if to-  
 night  
 My letter would not be a night too  
 late,  
 An arrow shot into a man that's dead,  
 To prove a vain intention? Would  
 I show  
 The new wife vile to make the hus-  
 band mad?  
 No, Lamia! shut the shutters, bar the  
 doors  
 From every glimmer on thy serpent-  
 skin:  
 I will not let thy hideous secret out  
 To agonize the man I love—I mean  
 The friend I love . . . as friends love.  
 It is strange,  
 To-day, while Marian told her story  
 like  
 To absorb most listeners, how I lis-  
 tened chief  
 To a voice not hers, nor yet that ene-  
 my's,  
 Nor God's in wrath . . . but one that  
 mixed with mine  
 Long years ago among the garden-  
 trees,  
 And said to *me*, to *me* too, "Be my  
 wife,  
 Aurora." It is strange with what a  
 swell  
 Of yearning passion, as a snow of  
 ghosts  
 Might beat against the impervious  
 door of heaven,  
 I thought, "Now, if I had been a  
 woman, such  
 As God made women, to save men  
 by love,

By just my love I might have saved  
 this man,  
 And made a nobler poem for the  
 world  
 Than all I have failed in." But I  
 failed besides  
 In this; and now he's lost—through  
 me alone!  
 And, by my only fault, his empty  
 house  
 Sucks in at this same hour a wind  
 from hell  
 To keep his hearth cold, make his  
 casements creak  
 Forever to the tune of plague and sin—  
 O Romney, O my Romney, O my  
 friend!  
 My cousin and friend! my helper,  
 when I would!  
 My love, that might be! mine!  
 Why, how one weeps  
 When one's too weary! Were a wit-  
 ness by,  
 He'd say some folly . . . that I loved  
 the man,  
 Who knows? . . . and make me  
 laugh again for scorn.  
 At strongest, women are as weak in  
 flesh,  
 As men, at weakest, vilest, are in  
 soul:  
 So hard for women to keep pace with  
 men!  
 As well give up at once, sit down at  
 once,  
 And weep as I do. Tears, tears! *why*  
 we weep?  
 'Tis worth inquiry?—That we've  
 shamed a life,  
 Or lost a love, or missed a world, per-  
 haps?  
 By no means. Simply that we've  
 walked too far,  
 Or talked too much, or felt the wind  
 i' the east;  
 And so we weep, as if both body and  
 soul  
 Broke up in water—this way.  
 Poor mixed rags  
 Forsooth we're made of, like those  
 other dolls  
 That lean with pretty faces into fairs.  
 It seems as if I had a man in me,  
 Despising such a woman. Yet, indeed,  
 To see a wrong or suffering moves us  
 all  
 To undo it, though we should undo  
 ourselves;

Ay, all the more that we undo ourselves :  
 That's womanly, past doubt, and not ill-moved.  
 A natural movement, therefore, on my part,  
 To fill the chair up of my cousin's wife,  
 And save him from a Devil's company!  
 We're all so, — made so : 'tis our woman's trade  
 To suffer torment for another's ease.  
 The world's male chivalry has perished out ;  
 But women are knights-errant to the last ;  
 And if Cervantes had been Shakespeare too,  
 He had made his Don a Donna.  
 So it clears,  
 And so we rain our skies blue.  
 Put away  
 This weakness. If, as I have just now said,  
 A man's within me, let him act himself,  
 Ignoring the poor conscious trouble of blood  
 That's called the woman merely. I will write  
 Plain words to England, — if too late,  
 too late ;  
 If ill accounted, then accounted ill :  
 We'll trust the heavens with something.

“ Dear Lord Howe,  
 You'll find a story on another leaf  
 Of Marian Erle, — what noble friend  
 of yours  
 She trusted once, through what flagitious means,  
 To what disastrous ends : the story's true.  
 I found her wandering on the Paris quays,  
 A babe upon her breast, — unnatural  
 Unseasonable outeast on such snow,  
 Unthawed to this time. I will tax in this  
 Your friendship, friend, if that convicted she  
 Be not his wife yet, to denounce the facts  
 To himself, but otherwise to let them pass  
 On tiptoe like escaping murderers,  
 And tell my cousin merely — Marian lives,

Is found, and finds her home with such a friend,  
 Myself, Aurora. Which good news,  
 'She's found,'  
 Will help to make him merry in his love :  
 I send it, tell him, for my marriage-gift,  
 As good as orange-water for the nerves.  
 Or perfumed gloves for headache, — though aware  
 That he, except of love, is scarcely sick :  
 I mean the new love this time . . . since last year.  
 Such quick forgetting on the part of men !  
 Is any shrewder trick upon the cards  
 To enrich them ? Pray instruct me how 'tis done.  
 First, clubs ; and, while you look at clubs, 'tis spades ;  
 That's prodigy. The lightning strikes a man,  
 And, when we think to find him dead and charred . . .  
 Why, there he is on a sudden playing pipes  
 Beneath the splintered elm-tree !  
 Crime and shame,  
 And all their hoggery, trample your smooth world,  
 Nor leave more foot-marks than Apollo's kine,  
 Whose hoofs were muffled by the thieving god  
 In tamarisk-leaves and myrtle. I'm so sad,  
 So weary and sad to-night, I'm somewhat sour, —  
 Forgive me. To be blue and shrewd at once  
 Exceeds all toleration except yours ;  
 But yours, I know, is infinite. Farewell !  
 To-morrow we take train for Italy.  
 Speak gently of me to your gracious wife,  
 As one, however far, shall yet be near  
 In loving wishes to your house.”  
 I sign.  
 And now I loose my heart upon a page,  
 This —  
 “ Lady Waldemar, I'm very glad  
 I never liked you ; which you knew so well

You spared me, in your turn, to like  
me much.  
Your liking surely had done worse for  
me  
Than has your loathing, though the  
last appears  
Sufficiently unscrupulous to hurt,  
And not afraid of judgment. Now  
there's space  
Between our faces, I stand off, as if  
I judged a stranger's portrait, and  
pronounced  
Indifferently the type was good or bad.  
What matter to me that the lines are  
false ?  
I ask you. Did I ever ink my lips  
By drawing your name through them  
as a friend's ?  
Or touch your hands as lovers do ?  
Thank God  
I never did ! And since you're proved  
so vile,  
Ay, vile, I say, — we'll show it pres-  
ently, —  
I'm not obliged to nurse my friend in  
you,  
Or wash out my own blots in counting  
yours,  
Or even excuse myself to honest  
souls  
Who seek to press my lip, or clasp my  
palm, —  
'Alas, but Lady Waldemar came first !'  
'Tis true, by this time you may near  
me so  
That you're my cousin's wife. You've  
gambled deep  
As Lucifer, and won the morning-star  
In that case ; and the noble house of  
Leigh  
Must henceforth with its good roof  
shelter you.  
I cannot speak and burn you up be-  
tween  
Those rafters, I who am born a Leigh ;  
nor speak  
And pierce your breast through Rom-  
ney's, I who live  
His friend and cousin : so you're safe.  
You two  
Must grow together like the tares and  
wheat  
Till God's great fire. But make the  
best of time.

" And hide this letter : let it speak no  
more  
Than I shall, how you tricked poor  
Marian Erle,

And set her own love digging its own  
grave  
Within her green hope's pretty gar-  
den-ground, —  
Ay, sent her forth with some one of  
your sort  
To a wicked house in France, from  
which she fled  
With curses in her eyes and ears and  
throat,  
Her whole soul choked with curses,  
mad, in short,  
And madly scouring up and down for  
weeks  
The foreign hedgeless country, lone  
and lost, —  
So innocent, male fiends might slink  
within  
Remote hell-corners seeing her so de-  
fied.

" But you, — you are a woman, and  
more bold.  
To do you justice, you'd not shrink to  
face . . .  
We'll say, the unfledged life in the  
other room,  
Which, treading down God's corn,  
you trod in sight  
Of all the dogs in reach of all the  
guns, —  
Ay, Marian's babe, her poor un-  
fathered child,  
Her yearling babe ! — you'd face him  
when he wakes  
And opens up his wonderful blue  
eyes ;  
You'd meet them, and not wink per-  
haps, nor fear  
God's triumph in them and supreme  
revenge  
When righting his creation's balance-  
scale  
(You pulled as low as Tophet) to the  
top  
Of most celestial innocence. For me  
Who am not as bold, I own those in-  
fant eyes  
Have set me praying.  
" While they look at heaven,  
No need of protestation in my words  
Against the place you've made them !  
let them look.  
They'll do your business with the  
heavens, be sure :  
I spare you common curses.  
" Ponder this ;  
If haply you're the wife of Romney  
Leigh,

(For which inheritance beyond your  
 birth  
 You sold that poisonous porridge  
 called your soul)  
 I charge you be his faithful and true  
 wife!  
 Keep warm his hearth, and clean his  
 board, and, when  
 He speaks, be quick with your obedi-  
 ence;  
 Still grind your paltry wants and low  
 desires  
 To dust beneath his heel, though,  
 even thus,  
 The ground must hurt him: it was  
 writ of old,  
 'Ye shall not yoke together ox and  
 ass.'  
 The nobler and ignobler. Ay; but  
 you  
 Shall do your part as well as such ill  
 things  
 Can do aught good. You shall not  
 vex him, — mark,  
 You shall not vex him, jar him when  
 he's sad,  
 Or cross him when he's eager. Un-  
 derstand  
 To trick him with apparent sympa-  
 thies,  
 Nor let him see thee in the face too  
 near,  
 And unlearn thy sweet seeming. Pay  
 the price  
 Of lies by being constrained to lie on  
 still:  
 'Tis easy for thy sort: a million more  
 Will scarcely damn thee deeper.  
 "Doing which  
 You are very safe from Marian and  
 myself:  
 We'll breathe as softly as the infant  
 here,  
 And stir no dangerous embers. Fail  
 a point,  
 And show our Romney wounded, ill  
 content,  
 Tormented in his home, we open  
 mouth,  
 And such a noise will follow, the last  
 trump's  
 Will scarcely seem more dreadful,  
 even to you;  
 You'll have no pipers after: Romney  
 will  
 (I know him) push you forth as none  
 of his,  
 All other men declaring it well  
 done;

While women, even the worst, your  
 like, will draw  
 Their skirts back, not to brush you in  
 the street:  
 And so I warn you. I'm . . . Aurora  
 Leigh."

The letter written, I felt satisfied.  
 The ashes smouldering in me were  
 thrown out  
 By handfuls from me: I had writ my  
 heart,  
 And wept my tears, and now was  
 cool and calm;  
 And, going straightway to the neigh-  
 boring room,  
 I lifted up the curtains of the bed  
 Where Marian Erle — the babe upon  
 her arm,  
 Both faces leaned together like a pair  
 Of folded innocences self-complete,  
 Each smiling from the other — smiled  
 and slept.  
 There seemed no sin, no shame, no  
 wrath, no grief.  
 I felt she too had spoken words that  
 night,  
 But softer certainly, and said to God,  
 Who laughs in heaven perhaps that  
 such as I  
 Should make ado for such as she.  
 "Defiled"  
 I wrote? "defiled" I thought her?  
 Stoop,  
 Stoop lower, Aurora! get the angels'  
 leave  
 To creep in somewhere, humbly on  
 your knees,  
 Within this round of sequestration  
 white  
 In which they have wrapt earth's  
 foundlings, heaven's elect.

The next day we took train to Italy,  
 And fled on southward in the roar of  
 steam.  
 The marriage-bells of Romney must  
 be loud  
 To sound so clear through all. I was  
 not well,  
 And truly, though the truth is like a  
 jest,  
 I could not choose but fancy, half the  
 way,  
 I stood alone i' the belfry, fifty bells,  
 Of naked iron, mad with merriment,  
 (As one who laughs and cannot stop  
 himself)  
 All clanking at me, in me, over me,

Until I shrieked a shriek I could not  
     hear,  
 And swooned with noise, but still,  
     along my swoon,  
 Was 'ware the baffled changes back-  
     ward rang,  
 Prepared at each emerging sense to  
     beat  
 And crash it out with clangor. I was  
     weak;  
 I struggled for the posture of my  
     soul  
 In upright consciousness of place and  
     time,  
 But evermore, 'twixt waking and  
     asleep,  
 Slipped somehow, staggered, caught  
     at Marian's eyes  
 A moment, (it is very good for  
     strength  
 To know that some one needs you to  
     be strong)  
 And so recovered what I call myself,  
 For that time.  
     I just knew it when we swept  
 Above the old roofs of Dijon. Lyons  
     dropped  
 A spark into the night, half trodden  
     out  
 Unseen. But presently the winding  
     Rhône  
 Washed out the moonlight large along  
     his banks  
 Which strained their yielding curves  
     out clear and clean  
 To hold it, — shadow of town and  
     castle blurred  
 Upon the hurrying river. Such an  
     air  
 Blew thence upon the forehead, — half  
     an air  
 And half a water — that I leaned and  
     looked,  
 Then, turning back on Marian, smiled  
     to mark  
 That she looked ~~only~~ on her child,  
     who slept,  
 His face toward the moon too.  
     So we passed  
 The liberal open country and the  
     close,  
 And shot through tunnels, like a  
     lig. ing-wedge  
 By great Thor-hammers driven  
     through the rock,  
 Which, quivering through the intes-  
     tine blackness, splits,  
 And lets it in at once: the train swept  
     in

Athrob with effort, trembling with  
     resolve,  
 The fierce denouncing whistle wailing  
     on,  
 And dying off, smothered in the shud-  
     dering dark;  
 While we self-awed, drew troubled  
     breath, oppressed  
 As other Titans, underneath the  
     pile  
 And nightmare of the mountains.  
     Out, at last,  
 To catch the dawn afloat upon the  
     land.  
 — Hills, slung forth broadly and  
     gauntly everywhere,  
 Not cramped in their foundations,  
     pushing wide  
 Rich outspreads of the vineyards and  
     the corn,  
 (As if they entertained i' the name of  
     France)  
 While down their straining sides  
     streamed manifest  
 A soil as red as Charlemagne's  
     knightly blood,  
 To consecrate the verdure. Some one  
     said,  
 "Marseilles!" And lo, the city of  
     Marseilles,  
 With all her ships behind her, and  
     beyond,  
 The cimiter of ever-shining sea  
 For right-hand use, bared blue against  
     the sky!

That night we spent between the pur-  
     ple heaven  
 And purple water. I think Marian  
     slept;  
 But I, as a dog a-watch for his mas-  
     ter's foot,  
 Who cannot sleep or eat before he  
     hears,  
 I sate upon the deck, and watched the  
     night,  
 And listened through the stars for  
     Italy.  
 Those marriage-bells I spoke of  
     sounded far,  
 As some child's go-cart in the street  
     beneath  
 To a dying man who will not pass  
     the day,  
 And knows it, holding by a hand he  
     loves.  
 I, too, sate quiet, satisfied with death,  
 Sate silent. I could hear my own  
     soul speak,

And had my friend ; for Nature comes  
 sometimes,  
 And says, "I am ambassador for  
 God."  
 I felt the wind soft from the land of  
 souls ;  
 The old miraculous mountains heaved  
 in sight,  
 One straining past another along the  
 shore,  
 The way of grand dull Odyssean  
 ghosts  
 Athirst to drink the cool blue wine of  
 seas,  
 And stare on voyagers. Peak push-  
 ing peak,  
 They stood. I watched, beyond that  
 Tyrian belt  
 Of intense sea betwixt them and the  
 ship,  
 Down all their sides the misty olive-  
 woods  
 Dissolving in the weak congenial  
 moon,  
 And still disclosing some brown con-  
 vent-tower,  
 That seems as if it grew from some  
 brown rock,  
 Or many a little lighted village, dropt  
 Like a fallen star upon so high a  
 point  
 You wonder what can keep it in its  
 place  
 From sliding headlong with the water-  
 falls  
 Which powder all the myrtle and  
 orange groves  
 With spray of silver. Thus my Italy  
 Was stealing on us. Genoa broke  
 with day ;  
 The Doria's long pale palace striking  
 out,  
 From green hills in advance of the  
 white town,  
 A marble finger dominant to ships,  
 Seen glimmering through the uncer-  
 tain gray of dawn.

And then I did not think, "My  
 Italy !"  
 I thought, "My father !" Oh, my fa-  
 ther's house,  
 Without his presence ! Places are too  
 much,  
 Or else too little, for immortal man,—  
 Too little, when love's May o'ergrows  
 the ground ;  
 Too much, when that luxuriant robe  
 of green

Is rustling to our ankles in dead  
 leaves.  
 'Tis only good to be or here or there,  
 Because we had a dream on such a  
 stone,  
 Or this or that; but once being wholly  
 waked,  
 And come back to the stone without  
 the dream,  
 We trip upon't, alas ! and hurt our-  
 selves ;  
 Or else it falls on us, and grinds us  
 flat, —  
 The heaviest gravestone on this bury-  
 ing earth.  
 — But, while I stood and mused, a  
 quiet touch  
 Fell light upon my arm, and, turning  
 round,  
 A pair of moistened eyes convicted  
 mine.  
 "What, Marian ! is the babe astir so  
 soon ?"  
 "He sleeps," she answered. "I have  
 crept up thrice,  
 And seen you sitting, standing, still  
 at watch.  
 I thought it did you good till now; but  
 now" . . .  
 "But now," I said, "you leave the  
 child alone."  
 "And you're alone," she answered ;  
 and she looked  
 As if I, too, were something. Sweet  
 the help  
 Of one we have helped ! Thanks,  
 Marian, for such help.

I found a house at Florence on the  
 hill  
 Of Bellosguardo. 'Tis a tower which  
 keeps  
 A post of double observation o'er  
 That valley of Arno (holding as a  
 hand  
 The outspread city) straight toward  
 Fiesole  
 And Mount Morello and the setting  
 sun,  
 The Vallombrosan mountains oppo-  
 site,  
 Which sunrise fills as full as crystal  
 cups  
 Turned red to the brim because their  
 wine is red.  
 No sun could die, nor yet be born, un-  
 seen  
 By dwellers at my villa. Morn and  
 eve

Were magnified before us in the pure  
 Illimitable space and pause of sky,  
 Intense as angels' garments blanched  
 with God,  
 Less blue than radiant. From the  
 outer wall  
 Of the garden drops the mystic float-  
 ing gray  
 Of olive-trees, (with interruptions  
 green  
 From maize and vine) until 'tis caught  
 and torn  
 Upon the abrupt black line of cypress-  
 es  
 Which signs the way to Florence.  
 Beautiful  
 The city lies along the ample vale,  
 Cathedral, tower and palace, piazza  
 and street,  
 The river trailing like a silver cord  
 Through all, and curling loosely, both  
 before  
 And after, over the whole stretch of  
 land  
 Sown whitely up and down its oppo-  
 site slopes  
 With farms and villas.  
 Many weeks had passed,  
 No word was granted. Last, a letter  
 came  
 From Vincent Carrington,—“ My dear  
 Miss Leigh,  
 You've been as silent as a poet should,  
 When any other man is sure to speak.  
 If sick, if vexed, if dumb, a silver  
 piece  
 Will split a man's tongue, — straight  
 he speaks, and says,  
 ' Received that check.' But you . . .  
 I send you funds  
 To Paris, and you make no sign at  
 all.  
 Remember I'm responsible, and wait  
 A sign of you, Miss Leigh.  
 “ Meantime your book  
 Is eloquent as if you were not dumb;  
 And common critics, ordinarily deaf  
 To such fine meanings, and, like deaf  
 men, loath  
 To seem deaf, answering chance-wise,  
 yes or no,  
 ' It must be,' or ' It must not,' (most  
 pronounced  
 When least convinced) pronounce for  
 once aright:  
 You'd think they really heard, — and  
 so they do . . .  
 The burr of three or four who really  
 hear  
 And praise your book aright: fame's  
 smallest trump  
 Is a great ear-trumpet for the deaf as  
 posts,  
 No other being effective. Fear not,  
 friend:  
 We think here you have written a  
 good book,  
 And you, a woman! It was in you  
 — yes,  
 I felt 'twas in you; yet I doubted  
 half  
 If that od-force of German Reichen-  
 bach,  
 Which still from female finger-tips  
 burns blue,  
 Could strike out as our masculine  
 white-heats  
 To quicken a man. Forgive me. All  
 my heart  
 Is quick with yours since, just a fort-  
 night since,  
 I read your book and loved it.  
 “ Will you love  
 My wife too? Here's my secret I  
 might keep  
 A month more from you; but I yield  
 it up  
 Because I know you'll write the  
 sooner for't,  
 Most women (of your height even)  
 counting love  
 Life's only serious business. Who's  
 my wife  
 That shall be in a month? you ask?  
 nor guess?  
 Remember what a pair of topaz  
 eyes  
 You once detected, turned against  
 the wall,  
 That morning in my London paint-  
 ing-room;  
 The face half-sketch'd, and slurred;  
 the eyes alone!  
 But you . . . you caught them up  
 with yours, and said  
 ' Kate Ward's eyes surely.' — Now I  
 own the truth:  
 I had thrown them there to keep  
 them safe from Jove,  
 They would so naughtily find out  
 their way  
 To both the heads of both my Danaës,  
 Where just it made me mad to look  
 at them.  
 Such eyes! I could not paint or think  
 of eyes  
 But those, — and so I flung them into  
 paint,



And turned them to the wall's care.  
 Ay, but now  
 I've let them out, my Kate's. I've  
 painted her,  
 (I change my style, and leave mythol-  
 ogies),  
 The whole sweet face: it looks upon  
 my soul  
 Like a face on water, to beget itself.  
 A half-length portrait, in a hanging  
 cloak  
 Like one you wore once; 'tis a little  
 frayed,—  
 I pressed too for the nude, harmoni-  
 ous arm;  
 But she, she'd have her way, and  
 have her cloak:  
 She said she could be like you only  
 so,  
 And would not miss the fortune.  
 Ah, my friend,  
 You'll write and say she shall not  
 miss your love  
 Through meeting mine? in faith, she  
 would not change.  
 She has your books by heart more  
 than my words,  
 And quotes you up against me till I'm  
 pushed  
 Where, three months since, her eyes  
 were: nay, in fact,  
 Nought satisfied her but to make me  
 paint  
 Your last book folded in her dimpled  
 hands,  
 Instead of my brown palette, as I  
 wished,  
 And, grant me, the presentment had  
 been newer:  
 She'd grant me nothing. I com-  
 pounded for  
 The naming of the wedding-day next  
 month,  
 And gladly too. 'Tis pretty to re-  
 mark  
 How women can love women of your  
 sort,  
 And tie their hearts with love-knots  
 to your feet,  
 Grow insolent about you against  
 men,  
 And put us down by putting up the  
 lip,  
 As if a man — there *are* such, let us  
 own,  
 Who write not ill — remains a man,  
 poor wretch,  
 While you! — Write weaker than  
 Aurora Leigh,

And there'll be women who believe  
 of you  
 (Besides my Kate) that if you walked  
 on sand  
 You would not leave a footprint.  
 "Are you put  
 To wonder by my marriage, like poor  
 Leigh?  
 'Kate Ward!' he said. 'Kate Ward!'  
 he said anew.  
 'I thought' . . . he said, and  
 stopped, — 'I did not think' . . .  
 And then he dropped to silence.  
 "Ah, he's changed.  
 I had not seen him, you're aware, for  
 long,  
 But went, of course. I have not  
 touched on this  
 Through all this letter, conscious of  
 your heart,  
 And writing lightlier for the heavy  
 fact,  
 As clocks are voluble with lead.  
 "How poor,  
 To say I'm sorry! dear Leigh, dear-  
 est Leigh!  
 In those old days of Shropshire, —  
 pardon me, —  
 When he and you fought many a field  
 of gold  
 On what you should do, or you should  
 not do, —  
 Make bread, or verses, (it just came  
 to that)  
 I thought you'd one day draw a silk-  
 en peace  
 Through a golden ring. I thought  
 so: foolishly,  
 The event proved; for you went  
 more opposite  
 To each other, month by month, and  
 year by year,  
 Until this happened. God knows  
 best, we say,  
 But hoarsely. When the fever took  
 him first,  
 Just after I had writ to you in  
 France,  
 They tell me Lady Waldemar mixed  
 drinks,  
 And counted grains, like any salaried  
 nurse,  
 Excepting that she wept too. Then,  
 Lord Howe,  
 You're right about Lord Howe, Lord  
 Howe's a trump;  
 And yet, with such in his hand, a  
 man like Leigh

May lose as *he* does. There's an end  
to all,  
Yes, even this letter, though this  
second sheet  
May find you doubtful. Write a  
word for Kate:  
She reads my letters always, like a  
wife,  
And if she sees her name I'll see her  
smile  
And share the luck. So, bless you,  
friend of two!  
I will not ask you what your feeling  
is  
At Florence with my pictures. I can  
hear  
Your heart a-flutter over the snow-  
hills;  
And, just to pace the Pitti with you  
once,  
I'd give a half-hour of to-morrow's  
walk  
With Kate . . . I think so. Vincent  
Carrington."

The noon was hot: the air scorched  
like the sun,  
And was shut out. The closed per-  
siani threw  
Their long-scored shadows on my  
villa-floor,  
And interlined the golden atmos-  
phere  
Straight, still, — across the pictures  
on the wall,  
The statuette on the console, (of  
young Love  
And Psyche made one marble by a  
kiss)  
The low couch where I leaned, the  
table near,  
The vase of lilies Marian pulled last  
night,  
(Each green leaf and each white leaf  
ruled in black  
As if for writing some new text of  
fate)  
And the open letter rested on my  
knee;  
But there the lines swerved, trembled,  
though I sate  
Untroubled, plainly, reading it  
again  
And three times. Well, he's married:  
that is clear.  
No wonder that he's married, nor,  
much more,  
That Vincent's therefore "sorry."  
Why, of course

The lady nursed him when he was  
not well,  
Mixed drinks — unless nepenthe was  
the drink  
'Twas scarce worth telling. But a  
man in love  
Will see the whole sex in his mistress'  
hood,  
The prettier for its lining of fair rose,  
Although he catches back and says at  
last,  
"I'm sorry." Sorry. Lady Walde-  
mar  
At prettiest, under the said hood, pre-  
served  
From such a light as I could hold to  
her face  
To flare its ugly wrinkles out to  
shame,  
Is scarce a wife for Romney, as friends  
judge, —  
Aurora Leigh, or Vincent Carrington:  
That's plain. And if he's "conscious  
of my heart" . . .  
It may be natural, though the phrase  
is strong;  
(One's apt to use strong phrases, being  
in love)  
And even that stuff of "fields of  
gold," "gold rings,"  
And what he "thought," poor Vin-  
cent! what he "thought,"  
May never mean enough to ruffle  
me.  
— Why, this room stifles. Better  
burn than choke:  
Best have air, air, although it comes  
with fire;  
Throw open blinds and windows to  
the noon,  
And take a blister on my brow in-  
stead  
Of this dead weight! best perfectly  
be stunned  
By those insufferable cicale, sick  
And hoarse with rapture of the sum-  
mer heat,  
That sing, like poets, till their hearts  
break, — sing  
Till men say, "It's too tedious."  
Books succeed,  
And lives fail. Do I feel it so at  
last?  
Kate loves a worn-out cloak for being  
like mine,  
While I live self-despised for being  
myself,  
And yearn toward some one else, who  
yearns away

From what he is, in his turn. Strain  
 a step  
 Forever, yet gain no step? Are we  
 such  
 We cannot, with our admirations  
 even,  
 Our tiptoe aspirations, touch a  
 thing  
 That's higher than we? Is all a dis-  
 mal flat,  
 And God alone above each, — as the  
 sun  
 O'er level lagunes, to make them  
 shine and stink, —  
 Laying stress upon us with immediate  
 flame,  
 While we respond with our miasmal  
 fog,  
 And call it mounting higher because  
 we grow  
 More highly fatal?

Tush, Aurora Leigh!

You wear your sackcloth looped in  
 Cæsar's way,  
 And brag your failings as mankind's.  
 Be still.  
 There *is* what's higher, in this very  
 world,  
 Than you can live, or catch at. Stand  
 aside,  
 And look at others, — instance little  
 Kate.  
 She'll make a perfect wife for Car-  
 rington.  
 She always has been looking round  
 the earth  
 For something good and green to  
 alight upon  
 And nestle into, with those soft-  
 winged eyes,  
 Subsiding now beneath his manly  
 hand,  
 'Twixt trembling lids of inexpressive  
 joy.  
 I will not scorn her, after all, too  
 much,  
 That so much she should love me.  
 A wise man  
 Can pluck a leaf, and find a lecture  
 in't;  
 And I too . . . God has made me, —  
 I've a heart  
 That's capable of worship, love, and  
 loss:  
 We say the same of Shakspeare's.  
 I'll be meek  
 And learn to reverence, even this  
 poor myself.

The book, too — pass it. "A good  
 book," says he,  
 "And you a woman." I had laughed  
 at that  
 But long since. I'm a woman, it is  
 true;  
 Alas, and woe to us, when we feel it  
 most!  
 Then least care have we for the  
 crowns and goals  
 And compliments on writing our good  
 books.

The book has some truth in it, I be-  
 lieve;  
 And truth outlives pain, as the soul  
 does life.  
 I know we talk our Phædons to the  
 end,  
 Through all the dismal faces that we  
 make,  
 O'er-wrinkled with dishonoring agony  
 From decomposing drugs. I have  
 written truth,  
 And I a woman, — feebly, partially,  
 Inaptly in presentation, Romney'll  
 add,  
 Because a woman. For the truth it-  
 self,  
 That's neither man's nor woman's,  
 but just God's;  
 None else has reason to be proud of  
 truth:  
 Himself will see it sifted, disin-  
 thralled,  
 And kept upon the height and in the  
 light,  
 As far as and no farther than 'tis  
 truth;  
 For now he has left off calling firma-  
 ments  
 And strata, flowers and creatures,  
 very good,  
 He says it still of truth, which is his  
 own.

Truth, so far, in my book, — the truth  
 which draws  
 Through all things upwards, — that a  
 twofold world  
 Must go to a perfect cosmos. Natural  
 things  
 And spiritual, — who separates those  
 two  
 In art, in morals, or the social drift,  
 Tears up the bond of nature, and  
 brings death,  
 Paints futile pictures, writes unreal  
 verse,

<p>Leads vulgar days, deals ignorantly with men, Is wrong, in short, at all points. We divide This apple of life, and cut it through the pips: The perfect round which fitted Venus' hand Has perished as utterly as if we ate Both halves. Without the spiritual, observe, The natural's impossible, no form, No motion: without sensuous, spiritual Is inappreciable, no beauty or power. And in this twofold sphere the twofold man (For still the artist is intensely a man) Holds firmly by the natural to reach The spiritual beyond it, fixes still The type with mortal vision to pierce through, With eyes immortal to the antetype Some call the ideal, better called the real, And certain to be called so presently; When things shall have their names. Look long enough On any peasant's face here, coarse and lined, You'll catch Antinous somewhere in that clay, As perfect-featured as he yearns at Rome From marble pale with beauty; then persist, And, if your apprehension's competent, You'll find some fairer angel at his back, As much exceeding him as he the boor, And pushing him with empyreal disdain Forever out of sight. Ay, Carrington Is glad of such a creed: an artist must, Who paints a tree, a leaf, a common stone With just his hand, and finds it suddenly A piece with and conterminous to his soul. Why else do these things move him, — leaf, or stone? The bird's not moved, that pecks at a spring-shoot;</p>	<p>Nor yet the horse, before a quarry agraze: But man, the twofold creature, apprehends The twofold manner, in and outwardly, And nothing in the world comes single to him, A mere itself, — cup, column, or candlestick, All patterns of what shall be in the Mount; The whole temporal show related royally, And built up to eterne significance Through the open arms of God. "There's nothing great Nor small," has said a poet of our day, Whose voice will ring beyond the curfew of eve, And not be thrown out by the matin's bell: And truly, I reiterate, Nothing's small! No lily-muffled hum of a summer-bee, But finds some coupling with the spinning stars; No pebble at your foot, but proves a sphere; No chaffinch, but implies the cherubim; And (glancing on my own thin, veined wrist) In such a little tremor of the blood The whole strong clamor of a vehement soul Doth utter itself distinct. Earth's crammed with heaven, And every common bush afire with God; But only he who sees takes off his shoes, The rest sit round it and pluck black- berries, And daub their natural faces un- aware More and more from the first similitude.  Truth, so far, in my book! — a truth which draws From all things upward. I, Aurora, still Have felt it hound me through the wastes of life As Jove did Io; and until that hand Shall overtake me wholly, and on my head</p>
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Lay down its large unfluctuating  
 peace,  
 The feverish gad-fly pricks me up and  
 down.  
 It must be. Art's the witness of  
 what is  
 Behind this show. If this world's  
 show were all,  
 Then imitation would be all in art.  
 There Jove's hand gripes us! for we  
 stand here, we,  
 If genuine artists, witnessing for  
 God's  
 Complete, consummate, undivided  
 work;  
 — That every natural flower which  
 grows on earth  
 Implies a flower upon the spiritual  
 side,  
 Substantial, archetypal, all aglow  
 With blossoming causes, — not so far  
 away,  
 But we whose spirit-sense is some-  
 what cleared  
 May catch at something of the bloom  
 and breath, —  
 Too vaguely apprehended, though,  
 indeed,  
 Still apprehended, consciously or not,  
 And still transferred to picture,  
 music, verse,  
 For thrilling audient and beholding  
 souls  
 By signs and touches which are  
 known to souls.  
 How known, they know not; why,  
 they cannot find:  
 So straight call out on genius, say,  
 "A man  
 Produced this," when much rather  
 they should say,  
 "'Tis insight, and he saw this."  
 Thus is art  
 Self-magnified in magnifying a truth  
 Which, fully recognized, would  
 change the world,  
 And shift its morals. If a man could  
 feel,  
 Not one day, in the artist's ecstasy,  
 But every day, — feast, fast, or work-  
 ing day, —  
 The spiritual significance burn  
 through  
 The hieroglyphic of material shows,  
 Henceforward he would paint the  
 globe with wings,  
 And reverence fish and fowl, the bull,  
 the tree,  
 And even his very body as a man;

Which now he counts so vile, that all  
 the towns  
 Make offal of their daughters for its  
 use  
 On summer-nights, when God is sad  
 in heaven  
 To think what goes on in his recreant  
 world  
 He made quite other; while that  
 moon he made  
 To shine there, at the first love's cov-  
 enant,  
 Shines still, convictive as a marriage-  
 ring  
 Before adulterous eyes.  
 How sure it is,  
 That, if we say a true word, instantly  
 We feel 'tis God's, not ours, and pass  
 it on,  
 Like bread at sacrament we taste and  
 pass,  
 Nor handle for a moment, as indeed  
 We dared to set up any claim to  
 such!  
 And I — my poem — let my readers  
 talk.  
 I'm closer to it, I can speak as well:  
 I'll say with Romney, that the book  
 is weak,  
 The range uneven, the points of sight  
 obscure,  
 The music interrupted.  
 Let us go.  
 The end of woman (or of man, I  
 think)  
 Is not a book. Alas, the best of books  
 Is but a word in art, which soon  
 grows cramped,  
 Stiff, dubious-statured, with the  
 weight of years,  
 And drops an accent or digamma  
 down  
 Some cranny of unfathomable time,  
 Beyond the critic's reaching. Art  
 itself,  
 We've called the larger life, must feel  
 the soul  
 Live past it. For more's felt than is  
 perceived,  
 And more's perceived than can be in-  
 terpreted,  
 And love strikes higher with his lam-  
 bent flame  
 Than art can pile the fagots.  
 Is it so?  
 When Jove's hand meets us with  
 composing touch,  
 And when at last we are hushed and  
 satisfied,

Then Io does not call it truth, but love?  
 Well, well! my father was an Englishman:  
 My mother's blood in me is not so strong  
 That I should bear this stress of Tuscan noon,  
 And keep my wits. The town there seems to seethe  
 In this Medæan boil-pot of the sun,  
 And all the patient hills are bubbling round  
 As if a prick would leave them flat. Does heaven  
 Keep far off, not to set us in a blaze?  
 Not so; let drag your fiery fringes, heaven,  
 And burn us up to quiet. Ah! we know  
 Too much here, not to know what's best for peace;  
 We have too much light here, not to want more fire  
 To purify and end us. We talk, talk,  
 Conclude upon divine philosophies,  
 And get the thanks of men for hopeful books;  
 Whereat we take our own life up, and . . . pshaw!  
 Unless we piece it with another's life,  
 (A yard of silk to carry out our lawn)  
 As well suppose my little handkerchief  
 Would cover Samminiato, church and all,  
 If out I threw it past the cypresses,  
 As, in this ragged, narrow life of mine,  
 Contain my own conclusions.  
 But at least  
 We'll shut up the persiani, and sit down,  
 And when my head's done aching, in the cool,  
 Write just a word to Kate and Carrington.  
 May joy be with them! she has chosen well,  
 And he not ill.  
 I should be glad, I think,  
 Except for Romney. Had *he* married Kate,  
 I surely, surely, should be very glad.  
 This Florence sits upon me easily,  
 With native air and tongue. My graves are calm,  
 And do not too much hurt me. Marian's good,

Gentle, and loving, lets me hold the child,  
 Or drags him up the hills to find me flowers  
 And fill these vases ere I'm quite awake,—  
 My grandiose red tulips, which grow wild;  
 Or Dante's purple lilies, which he blew  
 To a larger bubble with his prophet breath;  
 Or one of those tall flowering reeds that stand  
 In Arno like a sheaf of sceptres left  
 By some remote dynasty of dead gods  
 To suck the stream for ages, and get green,  
 And blossom wheresoe'er a hand divine  
 Had warmed the place with ichor. Such I find  
 At early morning laid across my bed,  
 And wake up pelted with a childish laugh  
 Which even Marian's low precipitous "Hush!"  
 Has vainly interposed to put away;  
 While I, with shut eyes, smile and motion for  
 The dewy kiss that's very sure to come  
 From mouth and cheeks, the whole child's face at once  
 Dissolved on mine, as if a nosegay burst  
 Its string with the weight of roses overblown,  
 And dropt upon me. Surely I should be glad.  
 The little creature almost loves me now,  
 And calls my name "Alola," stripping off  
 The *rs* like thorns, to make it smooth enough  
 To take between his dainty, milk-fed lips.  
 God love him! I should certainly be glad,  
 Except, God help me! that I'm sorrowful  
 Because of Romney.  
 Romney, Romney! Well,  
 This grows absurd,—too like a tune that runs  
 I' the head, and forces all things in the world—  
 Wind, rain, the creaking gnat or stuttering fly—

To sing itself, and vex you ; yet perhaps  
 A paltry tune you never fairly liked,  
 Some " I'd be a butterfly," or " C'est l'amour."  
 We're made so, — not such tyrants to ourselves,  
 But still we are slaves to nature. Some of us  
 Are turned, too, overmuch like some poor verse  
 With a trick of ritournelle : the same thing goes,  
 And comes back ever.

Vincent Carrington

Is " sorry," and I'm sorry ; but *he's* strong  
 To mount from sorrow to his heaven of love,  
 And when he says at moments, " Poor, poor Leigh,  
 Who'll never call his own so true a heart,  
 So fair a face even," he must quickly lose  
 The pain of pity in the blush he makes  
 By his very pitying eyes. The snow, for him,  
 Has fallen in May, and finds the whole earth warm,  
 And melts at the first touch of the green grass.

But Romney, — he has chosen, after all.  
 I think he had as excellent a sun  
 To see by as most others ; and perhaps  
 Has scarce seen really worse than some of us,  
 When all's said. Let him pass. I'm not too much  
 A woman, not to be a man for once,  
 And bury all my dead like Alaric,  
 Depositing the treasures of my soul  
 In this drained water-course, then letting flow  
 The river of life again with commerce-ships,  
 And pleasure-barges full of silks and songs.  
 Blow, winds, and help us.

Ah, we mock ourselves

With talking of the winds ! perhaps as much  
 With other resolutions. How it weighs,

This hot, sick air ! and how I covet here  
 The dead's provision on the river-couch,  
 With silver curtains drawn on tinkling rings ;  
 Or else their rest in quiet crypts, laid by  
 From heat and noise, from those cicale, say,  
 And this more vexing heart-beat !

So it is.

We covet for the soul the body's part,  
 To die and rot. Even so, Aurora, ends  
 Our aspiration who bespoke our place  
 So far in the east. The occidental flats  
 Had fed us fatter, therefore ? we have climbed  
 Where herbage ends ? we want the beast's part now,  
 And tire of the angel's ? Men define a man,  
 The creature who stands front-ward to the stars,  
 The creature who looks inward to himself,  
 The tool-wright, laughing creature. 'Tis enough :  
 We'll say, instead, the inconsequent creature, man,  
 For that's his specialty. What creature else  
 Conceives the circle, and then walks the square ?  
 Loves things proved bad, and leaves a thing proved good ?  
 You think the bee makes honey half a year,  
 To loathe the comb in winter, and desire  
 The little ant's food rather ? But a man —  
 Note men ! — they are but women, after all,  
 As women are but Auroras ! — there are men  
 Born tender, apt to pale at a trodden worm,  
 Who paint for pastime, in their favorite dream,  
 Spruce auto-vestments flowered with crocus-flames ;  
 There are, too, who believe in hell, and lie ;  
 There are, too, who believe in heaven, and fear ;

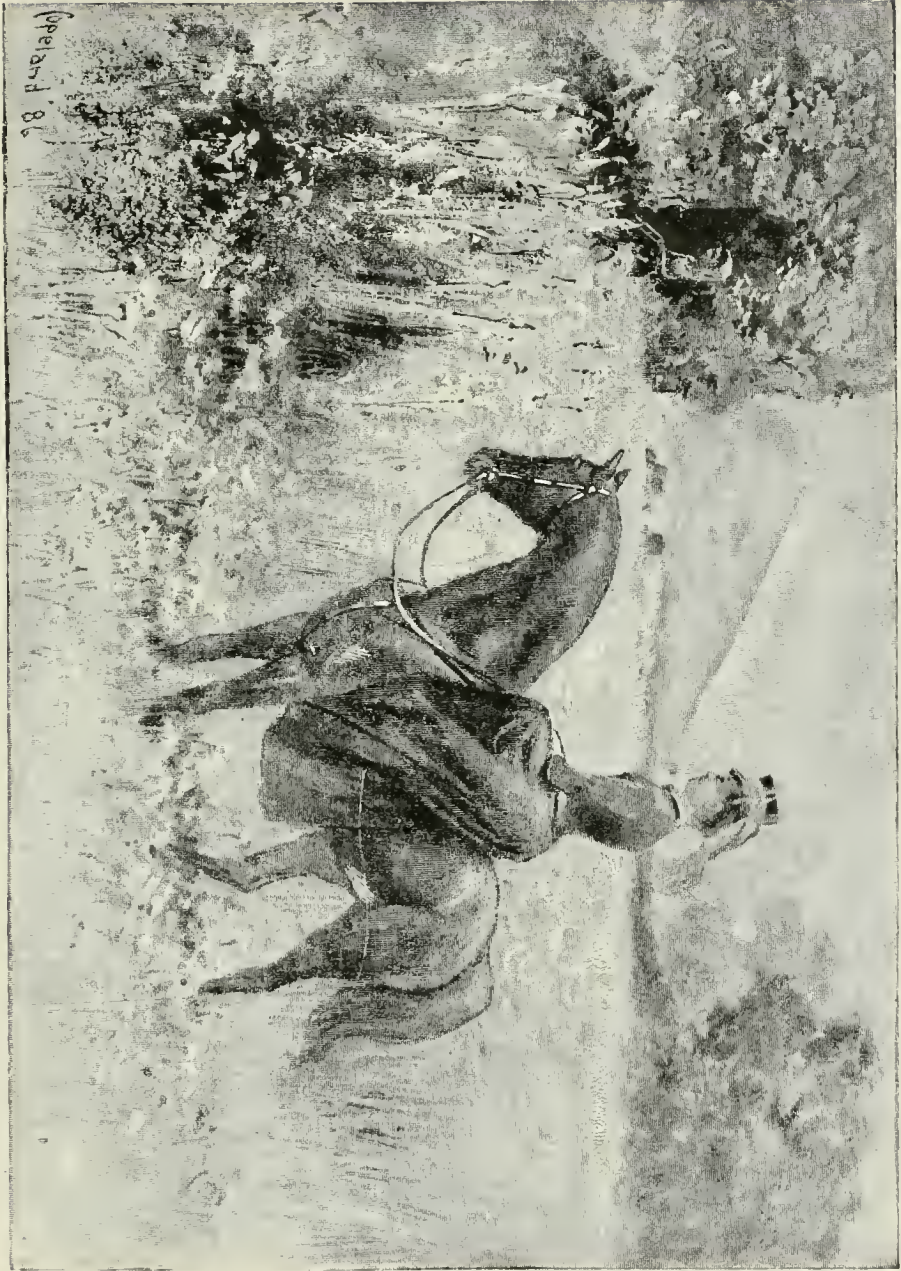
There are, who waste their souls in  
working out  
Life's problem on these sands betwixt  
two tides,  
Concluding, "Give us the oyster's  
part, in death."

Alas, long-suffering and most patient  
God,  
Thou needst be surelier God to bear  
with us  
Than even to have made us! thou  
aspire, aspire  
From henceforth for me! thou who  
hast thyself  
Endured this fleshhood, knowing how,  
as a soaked  
And sucking vesture it can drag us  
down,  
And choke us in the melancholy  
deep,  
Sustain me, that with thee I walk  
these waves,  
Resisting! — breathe me upward, thou  
in me  
Aspiring, who art the way, the truth,  
the life, —  
That no truth henceforth seem indif-  
ferent,  
No way to truth laborious, and no  
life,  
Not even this life I live, intolerable!

The days went by. 'I took up the old  
days,  
With all their Tuscan pleasures worn  
and spoiled,  
Like some lost book we dropt in the  
long grass  
On such a happy summer after-  
noon,  
When last we read it with a loving  
friend,  
And find in autumn, when the friend  
is gone,  
The grass cut short, the weather  
changed, too late,  
And stare at, as at something won-  
derful,  
For sorrow, thinking how two hands  
before  
Had held up what is left to only one,  
And how we smiled when such a  
vehement nail  
Impressed the tiny dint here which  
presents  
This verse in fire forever. Tenderly  
And mournfully I lived. I knew the  
birds

And insects, which looked fathered  
by the flowers  
And emulous of their hues; I recog-  
nized  
The moths, with that great overpoise  
of wings  
Which make a mystery of them how  
at all  
They can stop flying; butterflies, that  
bear  
Upon their blue wings such red em-  
bers round,  
They seem to scorch the blue air into  
holes  
Each flight they take; and fireflies,  
that suspire  
In short soft lapses of transported  
flame  
Across the tinkling dark, while over-  
head  
The constant and inviolable stars  
Outburn those lights-of-love; melodi-  
ous owls,  
(If music had but one note and was  
sad,  
'Twould sound just so), and all the  
silent swirl  
Of bats that seem to follow in the air  
Some grand circumference of a shad-  
owly dome  
To which we are blind; and then the  
nightingales,  
Which pluck our heart across a gar-  
den-wall,  
(When walking in the town) and  
carry it  
So high into the bowery almond-  
trees  
We tremble and are afraid, and feel  
as if  
The golden flood of moonlight un-  
aware  
Dissolved the pillars of the steady  
earth  
And made it less substantial. And I  
knew  
The harmless opal snakes, the large-  
mouthed frogs,  
(Those noisy vaunters of their shal-  
low streams)  
And lizards, the green lightnings of  
the wall,  
Which, if you sit down quiet, nor  
sigh loud,  
Will flatter you, and take you for a  
stone.  
And flash familiarly about your feet  
With such prodigious eyes in such  
small heads! —





"I dropped my horse's bridle on his neck." — Page 139.



I knew them (though they had somewhat dwindled from  
My childish imagery), and kept in  
mind

How last I sate among them equally,  
In fellowship and mateship, as a  
child

Feels equal still toward insect, beast,  
and bird,

Before the Adam in him has foregone  
All privilege of Eden, making  
friends

And talk with such a bird or such a  
goat,

And buying many a two-inch-wide  
rush-cage

To let out the caged cricket on a tree,  
Saying, "Oh, my dear grillino, were  
you cramped?"

And are you happy with the ilex-  
leaves?

And do you love me who have let you  
go?

Say *yes* in singing, and I'll under-  
stand."

But now the creatures all seemed far-  
ther off,

No longer mine, nor like me, only  
*there*,

A gulf between us. I could yearn,  
indeed,

Like other rich men, for a drop of  
dew

To cool this heat,—a drop of the  
early dew.

The irrecoverable child-innocence  
(Before the heart took fire and with-  
ered life)

When childhood might pair equally  
with birds;

But now . . . the birds were grown  
too proud for us,

Alas! the very sun forbids the dew.

And I—I had come back to an empty  
nest,

Which every bird's too wise for. How  
I heard

My father's step on that deserted  
ground,

His voice along that silence, as he  
told

The names of bird and insect, tree  
and flower,

And all the presentations of the stars  
Across Valdarno, interposing still

"My child," "my child." When  
fathers say, "My child,"

'Tis easier to conceive the universe,  
And life's transitions down the steps  
of law.

I rode once to the little mountain-  
house

As fast as if to find my father there;  
But when in sight of't, within fifty  
yards,

I dropped my horse's bridle on his  
neck,

And paused upon his flank. The  
house's front

Was cased with lingots of ripe Indian  
corn

In tessellated order and device  
Of golden patterns, not a stone of  
wall

Uncovered, not an inch of room to  
grow

A vine-leaf. The old porch had dis-  
appeared,

And right in the open doorway sate a  
girl

At plaiting straws, her black hair  
strained away

To a scarlet kerchief caught beneath  
her chin

In Tuscan fashion, her full ebon  
eyes,

Which looked too heavy to be lifted  
so,

Still dropt and lifted toward the mul-  
berry-tree,

On which the lads were busy with  
their staves

In shout and laughter, stripping every  
bough,

As bare as winter, of those summer  
leaves

My father had not changed for all the  
silk

In which the ugly silkworms hide  
themselves.

Enough. My horse recoiled before  
my heart.

I turned the rein abruptly. Back we  
went

As fast, to Florence.

That was trial enough  
Of graves. I would not visit, if I  
could,

My father's, or my mother's any  
more,

To see if stone-cutter or lichen beat  
So early in the race, or throw my  
flowers,

Which could not out-smell heaven, or  
sweeten earth.

<p>They live too far above, that I should look So far below to find them: let me think That rather they are visiting my grave, Called life here, (undeveloped yet to life) And that they drop upon me now and then, For token or for solace, some small weed Least odorous of the growths of par- adise, To spare such pungent scents as kill with joy.</p> <p>My old Assunta, too, was dead, — was dead. O land of all men's past! for me alone It would not mix its tenses. I was past, It seemed, like others, — only not in heaven. And many a Tuscan eve I wandered down The cypress alley like a restless ghost That tries its feeble, ineffectual breath Upon its own charred funeral-brands put out Too soon, where black and stiff stood up the trees Against the broad vermilion of the skies. Such skies! — all clouds abolished in a sweep Of God's skirt, with a dazzle to ghosts and men, As down I went, saluting on the bridge The hem of such before 'twas caught away Beyond the peaks of Lucca. Under- neath, The river, just escaping from the weight Of that intolerable glory, ran In acquiescent shadow murmurously; While up beside it streamed the festa- folk With fellow-murmurs from their feet and fans, And <i>issimo</i> and <i>ino</i> and sweet poise Of vowels in their pleasant, scandal- ous talk; Returning from the grand-duke's dairy-farm</p>	<p>Before the trees grew dangerous at eight, (For "trust no tree by moonlight," Tuscans say) To eat their ice at Donay's tenderly, Each lovely lady close to a cavalier Who holds her dear fan while she feeds her smile On meditative spoonfuls of vanille, And listens to his hot-breathed vows of love, Enough to thaw her cream, and scorch his beard.</p> <p>'Twas little matter. I could pass them by Indifferently, not fearing to be known. No danger of being wrecked upon a friend, And forced to take an iceberg for an isle! The very English here must wait, and learn To hang the cobweb of their gossip out To catch a fly. I'm happy. It's sub- lime, This perfect solitude of foreign lands! To be as if you had not been till then, And were then, simply that you chose to be; To spring up, not be brought forth from the ground, Like grasshoppers at Athens, and skip thrice Before a woman makes a pounce on you And plants you in her hair! — pos- sess, yourself, A new world all alive with creatures new, — New sun, new moon, new flowers, new people — ah, And be possessed by none of them! no right In one to call your name, inquire your where, Or what you think of Mister Some- one's book, Or Mister Other's marriage or de- cease, Or how's the headache which you had last week, Or why you look so pale still, since it's gone. — Such most surprising riddance of one's life</p>
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Comes next one's death: 'tis disem-  
 bodiment  
 Without the pang. I marvel people  
 choose  
 To stand stock-still, like fakirs, till  
 the moss  
 Grows on them and they cry out,  
 self-admired,  
 "How verdant and how virtuous!"  
 Well, I'm glad,  
 Or should be, if grown foreign to my-  
 self  
 As surely as to others.

Musing so,  
 I walked the narrow, unrecognizing  
 streets,  
 Where many a palace-front peers  
 gloomily  
 Through stony visors iron-barred,  
 (prepared  
 Alike, should foe or lover pass that  
 way,  
 For guest or victim) and came wan-  
 dering out  
 Upon the churches with mild open  
 doors  
 And plaintive wail of vespers, where  
 a few,  
 Those chiefly women, sprinkled  
 round in blots  
 Upon the dusky pavement, knelt and  
 prayed  
 Toward the altar's silver glory. Oft  
 a ray  
 (I liked to sit and watch) would trem-  
 ble out,  
 Just touch some face more lifted,  
 more in need,  
 (Of course a woman's) while I dreamed  
 a tale  
 To fit its fortunes. There was one  
 who looked  
 As if the earth had suddenly grown  
 too large  
 For such a little humpbacked thing  
 as she;  
 The pitiful black kerchief round her  
 neck  
 Sole proof she had had a mother.  
 One, again,  
 Looked sick for love, seemed pray-  
 ing some soft saint  
 To put more virtue in the new, fine  
 scarf  
 She spent a fortnight's meals on yes-  
 terday,  
 That cruel Gigi might return his eyes  
 From Giuliana. There was one, so  
 old,

So old, to kneel grew easier than to  
 stand;  
 So solitary, she accepts at last  
 Our Lady for her gossip, and frets  
 on  
 Against the sinful world which goes  
 its rounds  
 In marrying and being married, just  
 the same  
 As when 'twas almost good and had  
 the right,  
 (Her Gian alive and she herself eigh-  
 teen).  
 "And yet, now even, if Madonna  
 willed,  
 She'd win a tern in Thursday's lot-  
 tery,  
 And better all things. Did she dream  
 for nought,  
 That, boiling cabbage for the fast-  
 day's soup,  
 It smelt like blessed entrails? such a  
 dream  
 For nought? would sweetest Mary  
 cheat her so,  
 And lose that certain candle, straight  
 and white  
 As any fair grand-duchess in her  
 teens,  
 Which otherwise should flare here in  
 a week?  
*Benigna sis*, thou beauteous Queen of  
 heaven!"

I sate there musing, and imagining  
 Such utterance from such faces, poor  
 blind souls  
 That writhe toward heaven along the  
 Devil's trail:  
 Who knows, I thought, but he may  
 stretch his hand  
 And pick them up? 'Tis written in  
 the Book  
 He heareth the young ravens when  
 they cry,  
 And yet they cry for carrion. O my  
 God!  
 And we who make excuses for the  
 rest,  
 We do it in our measure. Then I  
 knelt,  
 And dropped my head upon the pave-  
 ment too,  
 And prayed—since I was foolish in  
 desire  
 Like other creatures, craving offal-  
 food—  
 That he would stop his ears to what I  
 said,

And only listen to the run and beat  
Of this poor, passionate, helpless  
blood —

And then  
I lay, and spoke not; but he heard in  
heaven.

So many Tuscan evenings passed the  
same.

I could not lose a sunset on the  
bridge,

And would not miss a vigil in the  
church,

And liked to mingle with the out-  
door crowd,

So strange and gay, and ignorant of  
my face;

For men you know not are as good as  
trees:

And only once, at the Santissima,  
I almost chanced upon a man I knew,  
Sir Blaise Delorme. He saw me cer-  
tainly,

And somewhat hurried, as he crossed  
himself,

The smoothness of the action; then  
half bowed,

But only half, and merely to my  
shade,

I slipped so quick behind the porphyry  
plinth,

And left him dubious if 'twas really I,  
Or peradventure Satan's usual trick  
To keep a mounting saint uncanon-  
ized.

But he was safe for that time, and I  
too:

The argent angels in the altar-flare  
Absorbed his soul next moment. The  
good man!

In England we were scarce acquaint-  
ances,

That here in Florence he should keep  
my thought

Beyond the image on his eye, which  
came

And went: and yet his thought dis-  
turbed my life;

For after that I oftener sat at home  
On evenings, watching how they fined  
themselves

With gradual conscience to a perfect  
night,

Until the moon, diminished to a  
curve,

Lay out there like a sickle for His  
hand

Who cometh down at last to reap the  
earth.

At such times ended seemed my  
trade of verse:

I feared to jingle bells upon my robe  
Before the four-faced silent chern-  
bim.

With God so near me, could I sing of  
God?

I did not write, nor read, nor even  
think,

But sate absorbed amid the quicken-  
ing glooms,

Most like some passive broken lump  
of salt

Dropt in by chance to a bowl of ceno-  
mel,

To spoil the drink a little, and lose it-  
self,

Dissolving slowly, slowly, until lost.

#### EIGHTH BOOK.

ONE eve it happened, when I sate  
alone,

Alone, upon the terrace of my tower,  
A book upon my knees to counterfeit  
The reading that I never read at all,  
While Marian, in the garden down  
below,

Knelt by the fountain I could just hear  
thrill

The drowsy silence of the exhausted  
day,

And peeled a new fig from that purple  
heap

In the grass beside her, turning out  
the red

To feed her eager child, who sucked  
at it

With vehement lips across a gap of  
air,

As he stood opposite, face and curls  
afame

With that last sun-ray, crying, "Give  
me, give!"

And stamping with imperious baby-  
feet,

(We're all born princes) something  
startled me, —

The laugh of sad and innocent souls  
that breaks

Abruptly, as if frightened at itself.

'Twas Marian laughed. I saw her  
glance above

In sudden shame that I should hear  
her laugh,

And straightway dropped my eyes  
upon my book,  
And knew, the first time, 'twas Boc-  
caccio's tale,  
The Falcon's, of the lover who for  
love  
Destroyed the best that loved him.  
Some of us  
Do it still, and then we sit, and laugh  
no more.  
Laugh *you*, sweet Marian, you've the  
right to laugh,  
Since God himself is for you, and a  
child.  
For me there's somewhat less, and so  
I sigh.

The heavens were making room to  
hold the night,  
The sevenfold heavens unfolding all  
their gates  
To let the stars out slowly (prophe-  
sied  
In close-approaching advent, not dis-  
cerned),  
While still the cue-owls from the cy-  
presses  
Of the Poggio called and counted  
every pulse  
Of the skyey palpitation. Gradu-  
ally  
The purple and transparent shadows  
slow  
Had filled up the whole valley to the  
brim,  
And flooded all the city, which you  
saw  
As some drowned city in some en-  
chanted sea,  
Cut off from nature, drawing you who  
gaze,  
With passionate desire, to leap and  
plunge,  
And find a sea-king with a voice of  
waves,  
And treacherous soft eyes, and slip-  
pery locks  
You cannot kiss but you shall bring  
away  
Their salt upon your lips. The duomo-  
bell  
Strikes ten, as if it struck ten fathoms  
down,  
So deep, and twenty churches answer  
it  
The same, with twenty various in-  
stances.  
Some gaslights tremble along squares  
and streets ;

The Pitti's palace-front is drawn in  
fire ;  
And, past the quays, Maria Novella  
Place,  
In which the mystic obelisks stand  
up  
Triangular, pyramidal, each based  
Upon its four-square brazen tortoises,  
To guard that fair church, Buonarro-  
ti's Bride,  
That stares out from her large blind  
dial-eyes,  
(Her quadrant and armillary dials,  
black  
With rhythms of many suns and  
moons) in vain  
Inquiry for so rich a soul as his.  
Methinks I have plunged, I see it all  
so clear . . .  
And O my heart . . . the sea-king !

In my ears  
The sound of waters. There he stood,  
my king !

I felt him, rather than beheld him.  
Up  
I rose, as if he were my king indeed.  
And then sate down, in trouble at  
myself,  
And struggling for my woman's em-  
pery.  
'Tis pitiful ; but women are so made :  
We'll die for you, perhaps, — 'tis  
probable ;  
But we'll not spare you an inch of our  
full height :  
We'll have our whole just stature, —  
five feet four,  
Though laid out in our coffins : piti-  
ful.  
— " You, Romney ! — Lady Waldemar  
is here ? "

He answered in a voice which was not  
his.  
" I have her letter : you shall read it  
soon.  
But first I must be heard a little, I  
Who have waited long and travelled  
far for that,  
Although you thought to have shut a  
tedious book,  
And farewell. Ah, you dog-eared  
such a page,  
And here you find me."  
Did he touch my hand,  
Or but my sleeve ? I trembled, hand  
and foot :

He must have touched me. "Will you sit?" I asked, And motioned to a chair; but down he sat, A little slowly, as a man in doubt, Upon the couch beside me, couch and chair Being wheeled upon the terrace.

"You are come, My cousin Romney? This is wonderful. But all is wonder on such summer-nights; And nothing should surprise us any more, Who see that miracle of stars. Behold."

I signed above, where all the stars were out, As if an urgent heat had started there A secret writing from a sombre page, A blank last moment, crowded suddenly With hurrying splendors.

"Then you do not know" — He murmured. "Yes, I know," I said, "I know. I had the news from Vincent Carrington. And yet I did not think you'd leave the work In England for so much even, — though of course You'll make a work-day of your holiday, And turn it to our Tusean people's use, — Who much need helping, since the Austrian boar (So bold to cross the Alp to Lombardy, And dash his brute front unabashed against The steep snow-bosses of that shield of God Who soon shall rise in wrath, and shake it clear) Came hither also, raking up our grape And olive gardens with his tyrannous tusk, And rolling on our maize with all his swine."

"You had the news from Vincent Carrington," He echoed, picking up the phrase beyond,

As if he knew the rest was merely talk To fill a gap and keep out a strong wind:

"You had, then, Vincent's personal news?"

"His own,"

I answered. "All that ruined world of yours Seems crumbling into marriage. Carrington Has chosen wisely."

"Do you take it so?"

He cried, "and is it possible at last" . . .

He paused there, and then, inward to himself, —

"Too much at last, too late! yet certainly" . . .

(And there his voice swayed as an Alpine plank

That feels a passionate torrent underneath)

"The knowledge, had I known it first or last,

Could scarce have changed the actual case for *me*,

And best for *her* at this time."

Nay, I thought,

He loves Kate Ward, it seems, now, like a man,

Because he has married Lady Waldemar!

Ah, Vincent's letter said how Leigh was moved

To hear that Vincent was betrothed to Kate.

With what cracked pitchers go we to deep wells

In this world! Then I spoke, — "I did not think,

My cousin, you had ever known Kate Ward."

"In fact I never knew her. 'Tis enough

That Vincent did, and therefore chose his wife

For other reasons than those topaz eyes

We've heard of. Not to undervalue them,

For all that. One takes up the world with eyes."

— Including Romney Leigh, I thought again,

Albeit he knows them only by repute. How vile must all men be, since *he's*

a man!



His deep pathetic voice, as if he  
 guessed  
 I did not surely love him, took the  
 word:  
 "You never got a letter from Lord  
 Howe  
 A month back, dear Aurora?"  
 "None," I said.

"I felt it was so," he replied. "Yet,  
 strange!  
 Sir Blaise Delorme has passed through  
 Florence?"  
 "Ay,  
 By chance I saw him in Our Lady's  
 Church,  
 (I saw him, mark you; but he saw not  
 me)  
 Clean-washed in holy water from the  
 count  
 Of things terrestrial,—letters and  
 the rest:  
 He had crossed us out together with  
 his sins.  
 Ay, strange; but only strange that  
 good Lord Howe  
 Preferred him to the post because of  
 pauls.  
 For me, I'm sworn to never trust a  
 man—  
 At least with letters."  
 "There were facts to tell,  
 To smooth with eye and accent.  
 Howe supposed . . .  
 Well, well, no matter! there was  
 dubious need:  
 You heard the news from Vincent  
 Carrington.  
 And yet perhaps you had been star-  
 tled less  
 To see me, dear Aurora, if you had  
 read  
 That letter."  
 — Now he sets me down as vexed.  
 I think I've draped myself in wo-  
 man's pride  
 To a perfect purpose. Oh, I'm  
 vexed, it seems!  
 My friend Lord Howe deposes his  
 friend Sir Blaise  
 To break, as softly as a sparrow's egg  
 That lets a bird out tenderly, the  
 news  
 Of Romney's marriage to a certain  
 saint,  
 To *smooth with eye and accent*,—indi-  
 cate  
 His possible presence. Excellently  
 well

You've played your part, my Lady  
 Waldemar,—  
 As I've played mine.  
 "Dear Romney," I began,  
 "You did not use of old to be so  
 like  
 A Greek king coming from a taken  
 Troy  
 'Twas needful that precursors spread  
 your path  
 With three-piled carpets to receive  
 your foot,  
 And dull the sound of't. For myself,  
 be sure,  
 Although it frankly grinds the gravel  
 here,  
 I still can bear it. Yet I'm sorry, too,  
 To lose this famous letter, which Sir  
 Blaise  
 Has twisted to a lighter absently  
 To fire some holy taper. Dear Lord  
 Howe  
 Writes letters good for all things but  
 to lose:  
 And many a flower of London gos-  
 sipry  
 Has dropt wherever such a stem  
 broke off.  
 Of course I feel that, lonely among  
 my vines,  
 Where nothing's talked of, save the  
 blight again,  
 And no more Chianti! Still the let-  
 ter's use  
 As preparation . . . Did I start in-  
 deed?  
 Last night I started at a cockchafer,  
 And shook a half-hour after. Have  
 you learnt  
 No more of women, 'spite of privi-  
 lege,  
 Than still to take account too seri-  
 ously  
 Of such weak flutterings? Why, we  
 like it, sir:  
 We get our powers and our effects  
 that way.  
 The trees stand stiff and still at time  
 of frost,  
 If no wind tears them; but let sum-  
 mer come,  
 When trees are happy, and a breath  
 avails  
 To set them trembling through a mil-  
 lion leaves  
 In luxury of emotion. Something  
 less  
 It takes to move a woman: let her  
 start

And shake at pleasure, nor conclude  
at yours,  
The winter's bitter, but the summer's  
green."

He answered, "Be the summer ever  
green  
With you, Aurora! though you sweep  
your sex  
With somewhat bitter gusts from  
where you live  
Above them, whirling downward  
from your heights  
Your very own pine-cones, in a grand  
disdain  
Of the lowland burrs with which you  
scatter them.

So high and cold to others and your-  
self,  
A little less to Romney were unjust,  
And thus, I would not have you.  
Let it pass:

I feel content so. You can bear, in-  
deed,  
My sudden step beside you: but for  
me,  
'Twould move me sore to hear your  
softened voice,—  
Aurora's voice,—if softened un-  
aware  
In pity of what I am."

Ah, friend! I thought,  
As husband of the Lady Waldemar  
You're granted very sorely pitiable;  
And yet Aurora Leigh must guard  
her voice  
From softening in the pity of your  
case,  
As if from lie or license. Certainly  
We'll soak up all the slush and soil of  
life  
With softened voices, ere we come to  
*you*.

At which I interrupted my own  
thought,  
And spoke out calmly. "Let us pon-  
der, friend,  
Whate'er our state, we must have  
made it first;  
And though the thing displease us,  
ay, perhaps  
Displease us warrantably, never  
doubt  
That other states, thought possible  
once, and then  
Rejected by the instinct of our lives,  
If then adopted, had displeased us  
more

Than this in which the choice, the  
will, the love,  
Has stamped the honor of a patent  
act

From henceforth. What we choose  
may not be good;  
But that we choose it proves it good  
for *us*

Potentially, fantastically, now  
Or last year, rather than a thing we  
saw,

And saw no need for choosing. Moths  
will burn

Their wings,—which proves that  
light is good for moths,  
Who else had flown not where they  
agonize."

"Ay, light is good," he echoed, and  
there paused;  
And then abruptly . . . "Marian.  
Marian's well?"

I bowed my head, but found no word.  
'Twas hard

To speak of *her* to Lady Waldemar's  
New husband. How much did he  
know, at last?

How much? how little? He would  
take no sign,

But straight repeated,—"Marian. Is  
she well?"

"She's well," I answered.

She was there in sight  
An hour back; but the night had  
drawn her home,  
Where still I heard her in an upper  
room,  
Her low voice singing to the child in  
bed,

Who, restless with the summer-heat  
and play,

And slumber snatched at noon, was  
long sometimes

In falling off, and took a score of  
songs

And mother hushes ere she saw him  
sound.

"She's well," I answered.

"Here?" he asked.  
"Yes, here."

He stopped and sighed. "That shall  
be presently;  
But now this must be. I have words  
to say,



"I'm thinking, Romney, how 'twas morning then  
And now, 'tis night." — Page 147.



And would be alone to say them, I  
with you,  
And no third troubling."

"Speak, then," I returned,  
"She will not vex you."

At which, suddenly  
He turned his face upon me with its  
smile,  
As if to crush me. "I have read  
your book,  
Aurora."

"You have read it," I replied,  
"And I have writ it—we have done  
with it.

And now the rest?"

"The rest is like the first,"  
He answered, "for the book is in my  
heart,

Lives in me, wakes in me, and dreams  
in me;

My daily bread tastes of it; and my  
wine

Which has no smack of it,—I pour it  
out,

It seem unnatural drinking."

Bitterly  
I took the word up: "Never waste  
your wine.

The book lived in me ere it lived in  
you;

I know it closer than another does,  
And how it's foolish, feeble, and  
afraid,

And all unworthy so much compli-  
ment.

Beseech you, keep your wine, and,  
when you drink,

Still wish some happier fortune to a  
friend

Than even to have written a far better  
book."

He answered gently: "That is conse-  
quent.

The poet looks beyond the book he  
has made,

Or else he had not made it. If a man  
Could make a man, he'd henceforth  
be a god

In feeling what a little thing is man:  
It is not my case. And this special  
book,

I did not make it, to make light of it:  
It stands above my knowledge, draws  
me up;

'Tis high to me. It may be that the  
book

Is not so high, but I so low, instead;  
Still high to me. I mean no compli-  
ment:

I will not say there are not, young or  
old,

Male writers, ay, or female, let it  
pass,

Who'll write us richer and completer  
books.

A man may love a woman perfectly,  
And yet by no means ignorantly  
maintain

A thousand women have not larger  
eyes:

Enough that she alone has looked at  
him

With eyes that, large or small, have  
won his soul.

And so, this book, Aurora, — so, your  
book."

"Alas!" I answered, "is it so, in-  
deed?"

And then was silent.

"Is it so, indeed,"  
He echoed, "that *alas* is all your  
word?"

I said, "I'm thinking of a far-off  
June,

When you and I, upon my birthday,  
once,

Discoursed of life and art, with both  
untried.

I'm thinking, Romney, how 'twas  
morning then,

And now 'tis night."

"And now," he said, "'tis night."

"I'm thinking," I resumed, "'tis  
somewhat sad,

That if I had known, that morning in  
the dew,

My cousin Romney would have said  
such words

On such a night at close of many  
years,

In speaking of a future book of mine,  
It would have pleased me better as a  
hope

Than as an actual grace it can at  
all:

That's sad, I'm thinking."

"Ay," he said, "'tis night."

"And there," I added lightly, "are  
the stars;

And here we'll talk of stars, and not  
of books."

" You have the stars," he murmured,  
 — it is well :  
 Be like them. Shine, Aurora, on my  
 dark,  
 Though high and cold, and only like a  
 star,  
 And for this short night only, — you  
 who keep  
 The same Aurora of the bright June  
 day  
 That withered up the flowers before  
 my face,  
 And turned me from the garden ever-  
 more,  
 Because I was not worthy. Oh, de-  
 served,  
 Deserved ! that I, who verily had not  
 learnt  
 God's lesson half, attaining as a dunce  
 To obliterate good words with frac-  
 tious thumbs,  
 And cheat myself of the context, —  
*I should push*  
 Aside, with male ferocious impudence,  
 The world's Aurora, who had conned  
 her part  
 On the other side the leaf ! ignore her  
 so,  
 Because she was a woman and a  
 queen,  
 And had no beard to bristle through  
 her song,  
 My teacher, who has taught me with  
 a book,  
 My Miriam, whose sweet mouth, when  
 nearly drowned,  
 I still heard singing on the shore !  
 Deserved,  
 That here I should look up unto the  
 stars,  
 And miss the glory" . . .  
 " Can I understand ?"  
 I broke in. " You speak wildly,  
 Romney Leigh,  
 Or I hear wildly. In that morning-  
 time  
 We recollect, the roses were too red,  
 The trees too green, reproach too nat-  
 ural  
 If one should see not what the other  
 saw :  
 And now it's night, remember ; we  
 have shades  
 In place of colors ; we are now grown  
 cold  
 And old, my cousin Romney. Pardon  
 me, —  
 I'm very happy that you like my book,  
 And very sorry that I quoted back

A ten-years' birthday. 'Twas so mad  
 a thing  
 In any woman, I scarce marvel much  
 You took it for a venturous piece of  
 spite,  
 Provoking such excuses as indeed  
 I cannot call you slack in."  
 " Understand,"  
 He answered sadly, " something, if  
 but so.  
 This night is softer than an English  
 day,  
 And men may well come hither when  
 they're sick,  
 To draw in easier breath from larger  
 air.  
 'Tis thus with me : I come to you, —  
 to you,  
 My Italy of women, just to breathe  
 My soul out once before you, ere I  
 go,  
 As humble as God makes me at the  
 last,  
 (I thank him) quite out of the way of  
 men,  
 And yours, Aurora, — like a punished  
 child,  
 His cheeks all blurred with tears and  
 naughtiness,  
 To silence in a corner. I am come  
 To speak, beloved" . . .  
 " Wisely, cousin Leigh,  
 And worthily of us both."  
 " Yes, worthily :  
 For this time I must speak out, and  
 confess  
 That I, so truculent in assumption  
 once,  
 So absolute in dogma, proud in aim,  
 And fierce in expectation, — I, who  
 felt  
 The whole world tugging at my skirts  
 for help,  
 As if no other man than I could pull,  
 Nor woman, but I led her by the hand,  
 Nor cloth hold, but I had it in my  
 coat, —  
 Do know myself to-night for what I  
 was  
 On that June-day, Aurora. Poor  
 bright day,  
 Which meant the best . . . a woman  
 and a rose,  
 And which I smote upon the cheek  
 with words,  
 Until it turned and rent me. Young  
 you were,  
 That birthday, poet ; but you talked  
 the right :

While I . . . I built up follies, like a  
wall,  
To intercept the sunshine and your  
face.  
Your face! that's worse."  
"Speak wisely, cousin Leigh."

"Yes, wisely, dear Aurora, though too  
late,  
But then, not wisely. I was heavy  
then,  
And stupid, and distracted with the  
cries  
Of tortured prisoners in the polished  
brass  
Of that Phalarian bull, society,  
Which seems to bellow bravely like  
ten bulls,  
But, if you listen, moans and cries  
instead  
Despairingly, like victims tossed and  
gored  
And trampled by their hoofs. I heard  
the cries  
Too close: I could not hear the angels  
lift  
A fold of rustling air, nor what they  
said  
To help my pity. I beheld the  
world  
As one great famishing carnivorous  
mouth,—  
A huge, deserted, callow, blind bird  
thing,  
With piteous open beak that hurt my  
heart,  
Till down upon the filthy ground I  
dropped,  
And tore the violets up to get the  
worms.  
Worms, worms, was all my cry: an  
open mouth,  
A gross want, bread to fill it to the  
lips,  
No more. That poor men narrowed  
their demands  
To such an end was virtue, I sup-  
posed,  
Adjudicating that to see it so  
Was reason. Oh, I did not push the  
case  
Up higher, and ponder how it answers  
when  
The rich take up the same cry for  
themselves,  
Professing equally, — 'An open  
mouth  
A gross need, food to fill us, and no  
more.'

Why, that's so far from virtue, only  
vice  
Can find excuse for't! that makes  
libertines,  
And slurs our cruel streets from end  
to end  
With eighty thousand women in one  
smile,  
Who only smile at night beneath the  
gas.  
The body's satisfaction, and no  
more,  
Is used for argument against the  
soul's,  
Here too: the want, here too, implies  
the right.  
— How dark I stood that morning in  
the sun,  
My best Aurora (though I saw your  
eyes)  
When first you told me . . . oh, I  
recollect  
The sound, and how you lifted your  
small hand,  
And how your white dress and your  
burnished curls  
Went greatening round you in the  
still blue air,  
As if an inspiration from within  
Had blown them all out when you  
spoke the words,  
Even these,—'You will not compass  
your poor ends  
Of barley-feeding and material ease  
Without the poet's individualism  
To work your universal. It takes a  
soul  
To move a body; it takes a high-  
souled man  
To move the masses even to a  
cleaner sty;  
It takes the ideal to blow an inch in-  
side  
The dust of the actual; and your  
Fouriers failed,  
Because not poets enough to under-  
stand  
That life develops from within.' I  
say  
Your words: I could say other  
words of yours;  
For none of all your words will let  
me go,  
Like sweet verbena, which, being  
brushed against,  
Will hold us three hours after by the  
smell,  
In spite of long walks upon windy  
hills.

But these words dealt in sharper perfume; these  
 Were ever on me, stinging through  
 my dreams,  
 And saying themselves forever o'er  
 my acts  
 Like some unhappy verdict. That  
 I failed  
 Is certain. Sty or no sty, to con-  
 trive  
 The swine's propulsion toward the  
 precipice  
 Proved easy and plain. I subtly or-  
 ganized  
 And ordered, built the cards up high  
 and higher,  
 Till, some one breathing, all fell flat  
 again:  
 In setting right society's wide wrong,  
 Mere life's so fatal! So I failed in-  
 deed  
 Once, twice, and oftener, hearing  
 through the rents  
 Of obstinate purpose, still those words  
 of yours, —  
 ' *You will not compass your poor ends,  
 not you!*'  
 But harder than you said them; every  
 time  
 Still farther from your voice, until  
 they came  
 To overerow me with triumphant  
 scorn,  
 Which vexed me to resistance. Set  
 down this  
 For condemnation. I was guilty here;  
 I stood upon my deed, and fought my  
 doubt,  
 As men will, — for I doubted, — till  
 at last  
 My deed gave way beneath me sud-  
 denly,  
 And left me what I am. The curtain  
 dropped,  
 My part quite ended, all the foot-  
 lights quenched,  
 My own soul hissing at me through  
 the dark,  
 I ready for confession, — I was wrong,  
 I've sorely failed, I've slipped the  
 ends of life,  
 I yield: you have conquered."  
 "Stay," I answered him:  
 "I've something for your hearing,  
 also. I  
 Have failed too."  
 "You!" he said, "you're very great:  
 The sadness of your greatness fits  
 you well,

As if the plume upon a hero's casque  
 Should nod a shadow upon his vic-  
 tor's face."

I took him up austerely, — "You have  
 read  
 My book, but not my heart; for, recol-  
 lect,  
 'Tis writ in Sanscrit, which you bun-  
 gle at.  
 I've surely failed, I know, if failure  
 means  
 To look back sadly on work gladly  
 done,  
 To wander on my Mountains of De-  
 light,  
 So called, (I can remember a friend's  
 words  
 As well as you, sir) weary, and in  
 want  
 Of even a sheep-path, thinking bit-  
 terly . . .  
 Well, well! no matter. I but say so  
 much,  
 To keep you, Romney Leigh, from  
 saying more,  
 And let you feel I am not so high in-  
 deed,  
 That I can bear to have you at my  
 foot,  
 Or safe, that I can help you. That  
 June day,  
 Too deeply sunk in craterous sunsets  
 now  
 For you or me to dig it up alive;  
 To pluck it out all bleeding with  
 spent flame  
 At the roots, before those moralizing  
 stars  
 We have got instead, — that poor lost  
 day, you said  
 Some words as truthful as the thing  
 of mine  
 You cared to keep in memory; and I  
 hold  
 If I that day, and being the girl I  
 was,  
 Had shown a gentler spirit, less arro-  
 gance,  
 It had not hurt me. You will scarce  
 mistake  
 The point here. I but only think, you  
 see.  
 More justly, that's more humbly of  
 myself,  
 Than when I tried a crown on, and  
 supposed . . .  
 Nay, laugh, sir, — I'll laugh with you!  
 — pray you laugh.



I've had so many birthdays since that day,  
I've learnt to prize mirth's opportunities,  
Which come too seldom. Was it you who said  
I was not changed? the same Aurora? Ah,  
We could laugh there too! Why, Ulysses' dog  
Knew *him*, and wagged his tail and died; but if  
I had owned a dog, I too, before my Troy,  
And if you brought him here . . . I warrant you  
He'd look into my face, bark lustily,  
And live on stoutly, as the creatures will  
Whose spirits are not troubled by long loves.  
A dog would never know me, I'm so changed,  
Much less a friend . . . except that you're misled  
By the color of the hair, the trick of the voice,  
Like that Aurora Leigh's."  
"Sweet trick of voice!  
I would be a dog for this, to know it at last.  
And die upon the falls of it. O love,  
O best Aurora! are you then so sad  
You scarcely had been sadder as my wife?"

"Your wife, sir! I must certainly be changed,  
If I, Aurora, can have said a thing  
So light, it catches at the knightly spurs  
Of a noble gentleman like Romney Leigh,  
And trips him from his honorable sense  
Of what befits" . . .  
"You wholly misconceive."  
He answered.  
I returned, — "I'm glad of it.  
But keep from misconception, too, yourself:  
I am not humbled to so low a point,  
Nor so far saddened. If I am sad at all,  
Ten layers of birthdays on a woman's head  
Are apt to fossilize her girlish mirth,  
Though ne'er so merry: I'm perforce more wise,

And that, in truth, means sadder.  
For the rest,  
Look here, sir: I was right, upon the whole,  
That birthday morning. 'Tis impossible  
To get at men excepting through their souls,  
However open their carnivorous jaws;  
And poets get directlier at the soul  
Than any of your economists; for which  
You must not overlook the poet's work  
When scheming for the world's necessities.  
The soul's the way. Not even Christ himself  
Can save man else than as he holds man's soul;  
And therefore did he come into our flesh,  
As some wise hunter, creeping on his knees  
With a torch, into the blackness of a cave,  
To face and quell the beast there, — take the soul,  
And so possess the whole man, body and soul.  
I said, so far, right, yes; not farther, though:  
We both were wrong that June day, — both as wrong  
As an east wind had been. I who talked of art,  
And you who grieved for all men's griefs . . . what then?  
We surely made too small a part for God  
In these things. What we are imports us more  
Than what we eat; and life, you've granted me,  
Develops from within. But innermost  
Of the inmost, most interior of the interne,  
God claims his own, divine humanity  
Renewing nature: or the piercingest verse,  
Prest in by subtlest poet still must keep  
As much upon the outside of a man  
As the very bowl in which he dips his beard.  
— And then . . . the rest; I cannot surely speak:

<p>Perhaps I doubt more than you doubted then, If I the poet's veritable charge Have borne upon my forehead. If I have, It might feel somewhat liker to a crown, The foolish green one, even. Ah, I think, And chiefly when the sun shines, that I've failed. But what then, Romney? Though we fail indeed, You . . . I . . . a score of such weak workers . . . He Fails never. If he cannot work by us, He will work over us. Does he want a man, Much less a woman, think you? Every time The star winks there, so many souls are born, Who all shall work too. Let our own be calm: We should be ashamed to sit beneath those stars, Impatient that we're nothing." "Could we sit Just so forever, sweetest friend," he said, "My failure would seem better than success. And yet indeed your book has dealt with me More gently, cousin, than you ever will. Your book brought down entire the bright June day, And set me wandering in the garden- walks, And let me watch the garland in a place You blushed so . . . nay, forgive me, do not stir; I only thank the book for what it taught, And what permitted. Poet doubt yourself, But never doubt that you're a poet to me From henceforth. You have written poems, sweet, Which moved me in secret, as the sap is moved In still March branches, signless as a stone; But this last book o'ercame me like soft rain</p>	<p>Which falls at midnight, when the tightened bark Breaks out into unhesitating buds, And sudden protestations of the spring. In all your other books I saw but <i>you</i>. A man, may see the moon so, in a pond, And not be nearer therefore to the moon, Nor use the sight . . . except to drown himself: And so I forced my heart back from the sight, For what had <i>I</i>, I thought, to do with <i>her</i>, Aurora . . . Romney? But in this last book You showed me something separate from yourself, Beyond you, and I bore to take it in, And let it draw me. You have shown me truths, O June-day friend, that help me now at night When June is over,— truths not yours, indeed, But set within my reach by means of you, Presented by your voice and verse the way To take them clearest. Verily I was wrong; And verily many thinkers of this age, Ay, many Christian teachers, half in heaven, Are wrong in just my sense who un- derstood Our natural world too insularly, as if No spiritual counterpart completed it, Consummating its meaning, rounding all To justice and perfection, line by line, Form by form, nothing single nor alone, The great below clinched by the great above, Shade here authenticating substance there, The body proving spirit, as the effect The cause: we meantime being too grossly apt To hold the natural, as dogs a bone, (Though reason and nature beat us in the face) So obstinately that we'll break our teeth</p>
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Or ever we let go. For everywhere  
 We're too materialistic, eating clay,  
 (Like men of the west) instead of  
 Adam's corn  
 And Noah's wine, — clay by handfuls,  
 clay by lumps,  
 Until we're filled up to the throat  
 with clay,  
 And grow the grimy color of the  
 ground  
 On which we are feeding. Ay, mate-  
 rialist  
 The age's name is. God himself, with  
 some,  
 Is apprehended as the bare result  
 Of what his hand materially has  
 made,  
 Expressed in such an algebraic sign  
 Called God; that is, to put it other-  
 wise,  
 They add up nature to a nought of  
 God,  
 And cross the quotient. There are  
 many even,  
 Whose names are written in the  
 Christian church  
 To no dishonor, diet still on mud,  
 And splash the altars with it. You  
 might think  
 The clay Christ laid upon their eye-  
 lids, when,  
 Still blind, he called them to the use  
 of sight,  
 Remained there to retard its exer-  
 cise  
 With elogging incrustations. Close  
 to heaven,  
 They see for mysteries, through the  
 open doors,  
 Vague puffs of smoke from pots of  
 earthenware,  
 And fain would enter, when their  
 time shall come,  
 With quite another body than St.  
 Paul  
 Has promised, — husk and chaff, the  
 whole barley-corn,  
 Or where's the resurrection?"  
 "Thus it is,"  
 I sighed. And he resumed with  
 mournful face.  
 "Beginning so, and filling up with  
 clay  
 The wards of this great key, the natu-  
 ral world,  
 And fumbling vainly therefore at the  
 lock  
 Of the spiritual, we feel ourselves  
 shut in

With all the wild-beast roar of strug-  
 gling life,  
 The terrors and compunctions of our  
 souls,  
 As saints with lions, — we who are  
 not saints,  
 And have no heavenly lordship in  
 our stare  
 To awe them backward. Ay, we are  
 forced, so pent,  
 To judge the whole too partially . . .  
 confound  
 Conclusions. Is there any common  
 phrase  
 Significant, with the adverb heard  
 alone,  
 The verb being absent, and the pro-  
 noun out?  
 But we, distracted in the roar of  
 life,  
 Still insolently at God's adverb  
 snatch,  
 And bruit against him that his thought  
 is void,  
 His meaning hopeless, — cry, that  
 everywhere  
 The government is slipping from his  
 hand,  
 Unless some other Christ (say Rom-  
 ney Leigh)  
 Come up and toil and moil and change  
 the world,  
 Because the First has proved inade-  
 quate,  
 However we talk bigly of his work  
 And piously of his person. We blas-  
 pheme  
 At last, to finish our doxology,  
 Despairing on the earth for which he  
 died."

"So now," I asked, "you have more  
 hope of men?"

"I hope," he answered. "I am come  
 to think  
 That God will have his work done, as  
 you said,  
 And that we need not be disturbed  
 too much  
 For Romney Leigh or others having  
 failed  
 With this or that quack nostrum, —  
 recipes  
 For keeping summits by annulling  
 depths,  
 For wrestling with luxurious loun-  
 ging sleeves,  
 And acting heroism without a scratch.

We fail,— what then? Aurora, if I  
 smiled  
 To see you, in your lovely morning-  
 pride,  
 Try on the poet's wreath which suits  
 the noon,  
 (Sweet cousin, walls must get the  
 weather-stain  
 Before they grow the ivy) certainly  
 I stood myself there worthier of con-  
 tempt,  
 Self rated, in disastrous arrogance,  
 As competent to sorrow for mankind  
 And even their odds. A man may  
 well despair,  
 Who counts himself so needful to  
 success.  
 I failed: I throw the remedy back on  
 God,  
 And sit down here beside you, in  
 good hope."

"And yet take heed," I answered,  
 "lest we lean  
 Too dangerously on the other side,  
 And so fail twice. Be sure, no ear-  
 nest work  
 Of any honest creature, howbeit  
 weak,  
 Imperfect, ill-adapted, fails so much  
 It is not gathered as a grain of sand  
 To enlarge the sum of human action  
 used  
 For carrying out God's end. No crea-  
 ture works  
 So ill, observe, that therefore he's  
 cashiered.  
 The honest earnest man must stand  
 and work,  
 The woman also: otherwise she  
 drops  
 At once below the dignity of man,  
 Accepting serfdom. Free men freely  
 work.  
 Whoever fears God fears to sit at  
 ease."

He cried, "True. After Adam, work  
 was curse:  
 The natural creature labors, sweats,  
 and frets.  
 But, after Christ, work turns to privi-  
 lege,  
 And henceforth, one with our human-  
 ity,  
 The Six-day Worker, working still in  
 us,  
 Has called us freely to work on with  
 him

In high companionship. So, hap-  
 piest!  
 I count that heaven itself is only  
 work  
 To a surer issue. Let us work, in-  
 deed,  
 But no more work as Adam, nor as  
 Leigh  
 Erewhile, as if the only man on  
 earth,  
 Responsible for all the thistles blown,  
 And tigers couchant, struggling in  
 amaze  
 Against disease and winter, snarling  
 on  
 Forever that the world's not para-  
 dise.  
 O cousin, let us be content, in work,  
 To do the thing we can, and not pre-  
 sume  
 To fret because it's little. 'Twill em-  
 ploy  
 Seven men they say to make a per-  
 fect pin;  
 Who makes the head, content to miss  
 the point;  
 Who makes the point, agreed to leave  
 the join:  
 And if a man should cry, 'I want a  
 pin,  
 And I must make it straightway,  
 head and point,'  
 His wisdom is not worth the pin he  
 wants.  
 Seven men to a pin, and not a man  
 too much.  
 Seven generations, haply, to this  
 world,  
 To right it visibly a finger's breadth,  
 And mend its rents a little. Oh, to  
 storm  
 And say, 'This world here is intoler-  
 able;  
 I will not eat this corn, nor drink this  
 wine,  
 Nor love this woman, flinging her my  
 soul  
 Without a bond for't as a lover  
 should,  
 Nor use the generous leave of happi-  
 ness  
 As not too good for using generous-  
 ly'—  
 (Since virtue kindles at the touch of  
 joy,  
 Like a man's cheek laid on a woman's  
 hand,  
 And God, who knows it, looks for  
 quick returns

From joys)—to stand and claim to have a life  
 Beyond the bounds of the individual man,  
 And raze all personal cloisters of the soul  
 To build up public stores and magazines,  
 As if God's creatures otherwise were lost,  
 The buidler surely saved by any means!  
 To think, — I have a pattern on my nail,  
 And I will carve the world new after it,  
 And solve so these hard social questions, nay,  
 Impossible social questions, since their roots  
 Strike deep in evil's own existence here,  
 Which God permits because the question's hard  
 To abolish evil nor attain free-will.  
 Ay, hard to God, but not to Romney Leigh;  
 For Romney has a pattern on his nail  
 (Whatever may be lacking on the Mount),  
 And, not being overnice to separate  
 What's element from what's convention, hastes  
 By line on line to draw you out a world,  
 Without your help indeed, unless you take  
 His yoke upon you, and will learn of him,  
 So much he has to teach! — so good a world,  
 The same the whole creation's groaning for!  
 No rich nor poor, no gain nor loss nor stint,  
 No pottage in it able to exclude  
 A brother's birthright, and no right of birth,  
 The pottage, — both secured to every man,  
 And perfect virtue dealt out like the rest  
 Gratuitously, with the soup at six,  
 To whoso does not seek it."  
 "Softly, sir,"  
 I interrupted. "I had a cousin once  
 I held in reverence. If he strained  
 too wide,

It was not to take honor, but give help.  
 The gesture was heroic. If his hand  
 Accomplished nothing . . . (well, it is not proved)  
 That empty hand thrown impotently out  
 Were sooner caught, I think, by One  
 in heaven,  
 Than many a hand that reaped a harvest in  
 And keeps the scythe's glow on it.  
 Pray you, then,  
 For my sake merely, use less bitterness  
 In speaking of my cousin."  
 "Ah," he said,  
 "Aurora! when the prophet beats the ass,  
 The angel intercedes." He shook his head.  
 "And yet to mean so well, and fail so foul,  
 Expresses ne'er another beast than man:  
 The antithesis is human. Harken, dear:  
 There's too much abstract willing, purposing,  
 In this poor world. We talk by aggregates,  
 And think by systems, and, being used to face  
 Our evils in statistics, are inclined  
 To cap them with unreal remedies  
 Drawn out in haste on the other side the slate."  
 "That's true," I answered, fain to throw up thought,  
 And make a game of't. "Yes, we generalize  
 Enough to please you. If we pray at all,  
 We pray no longer for our daily bread,  
 But next centenary's harvests. If we give,  
 Our cup of water is not tendered till  
 We lay down pipes and found a company  
 With branches. Ass or angel, 'tis the same:  
 A woman cannot do the thing she ought,  
 Which means whatever perfect thing she can,  
 In life, in art, in science, but she fears

To let the perfect action take her  
 part,  
 And rest there: she must prove what  
 she can do  
 Before she does it, prate of woman's  
 rights,  
 Of woman's mission, woman's func-  
 tion, till  
 The men (who are prating too on  
 their side) cry,  
 'A woman's function plainly is . . .  
 to talk.'  
 Poor souls, they are very reasonably  
 vexed:  
 They cannot hear each other talk."  
 "And you,  
 An artist, judge so?"  
 "I, an artist, yes.  
 Because, precisely, I'm an artist, sir,  
 And woman, if another sate in sight,  
 I'd whisper, — 'Soft, my sister! not a  
 word!  
 By speaking we prove only we can  
 speak,  
 Which he, the man here, never  
 doubted. What  
 He doubts is, whether we can *do* the  
 thing  
 With decent grace we've not yet  
 done at all.  
 Now, do it; bring your statue, — you  
 have room!  
 He'll see it even by the starlight  
 here;  
 And if 'tis ere so little like the god  
 Who looks out from the marble si-  
 lently  
 Along the track of his own shining  
 dart  
 Through the dusk of ages, there's no  
 need to speak:  
 The universe shall henceforth speak  
 for you,  
 And witness, "She who did this thing  
 was born  
 To do it, — claims her license in her  
 work.'"  
 And so with more works. Whoso  
 cures the plague,  
 Though twice a woman, shall be  
 called a leech;  
 Who rights a land's finances is ex-  
 cused  
 For touching coppers, though her  
 hands be white, —  
 But we, we talk!"  
 "It is the age's mood,"  
 He said: "we boast, and do not. We  
 pnt up

Hostelry signs where'er we lodge a  
 day,  
 Some red colossal cow with mighty  
 paps  
 A Cyclops' fingers could not strain to  
 milk,  
 Then bring out presently our saucer-  
 ful  
 Of curds. We want more quiet in  
 our works,  
 More knowledge of the bounds in  
 which we work,  
 More knowledge that each individual  
 man  
 Remains an Adam to the general  
 race,  
 Constrained to see, like Adam, that  
 he keep  
 His personal state's condition hon-  
 estly,  
 Or vain all thoughts of his to help  
 the world,  
 Which still must be developed from  
 its *one*,  
 If bettered in its many. We indeed,  
 Who think to lay it out new like a  
 park, —  
 We take a work on us which is not  
 man's;  
 For God alone sits far enough above  
 To speculate so largely. None of us  
 (Not Romney Leigh) is mad enough  
 to say,  
 We'll have a grove of oaks upon that  
 slope,  
 And sink the need of acorns. Gov-  
 ernment,  
 If veritable and lawful, is not given  
 By imposition of the foreign hand,  
 Nor chosen from a pretty pattern-book  
 Of some domestic ideologue who sits  
 And coldly chooses empire, where as  
 well  
 He might republic. Genuine govern-  
 ment  
 Is but the expression of a nation, good  
 Or less good, even as all society,  
 Howe'er unequal, monstrous, crazed,  
 and cursed,  
 Is but the expression of men's single  
 lives,  
 The loud sum of the silent units.  
 What,  
 We'd change the aggregate, and yet  
 retain  
 Each separate figure? whom do we  
 cheat by that?  
 Now, not even Romney."  
 "Cousin, you are sad.

Did all your social labor at Leigh  
Hall  
And elsewhere come to nought,  
then?"

It was nought,"  
He answered mildly. "There is room  
indeed  
For statues still, in this large world of  
God's,  
But not for vacuums: so I am not  
sad, —  
Not sadder than is good for what I  
am.

My vain phalanstery dissolved itself;  
My men and women of disordered  
lives,  
I brought in orderly to dine and  
sleep,  
Broke up those waxen masks I made  
them wear,  
With fierce contortions of the natural  
face,  
And cursed me for my tyrannous con-  
straint  
In forcing crooked creatures to live  
straight,  
And set the country hounds upon my  
back  
To bite and tear me for my wicked  
deed

Of trying to do good without the  
church,  
Or even the squires, Aurora. Do you  
mind

Your ancient neighbors? The great  
book-club teems  
With 'sketches,' 'summaries,' and  
'last tracts,' but twelve,

On socialistic troublers of close bonds  
Betwixt the generous rich and grate-  
ful poor.

The vicar preached from 'Revela-  
tion,' (till  
The doctor woke) and found me with  
'the frogs'

On three successive Sundays; ay, and  
stopped

To weep a little (for he's getting old)  
That such perdition should o'ertake a  
man

Of such fair acres, — in the parish, too!  
He printed his discourses 'by re-  
quest;'

And, if your book shall sell as his did,  
then

Your verses are less good than I sup-  
pose.

The women of the neighborhood sub-  
scribed,

And sent me a copy bound in scarlet  
silk,  
Tooled edges, blazoned with the arms  
of Leigh:

I own that touched me."  
"What, the pretty ones?  
Poor Romney!"

"Otherwise the effect was small.  
I had my windows broken once or  
twice  
By liberal peasants naturally in-  
censed

At such a vexer of Arcadian peace,  
Who would not let men call their  
wives their own  
To kick like Britons, and made obsta-  
cles

When things went smoothly, as a  
baby drugged,  
Toward freedom and starvation,  
bringing down  
The wicked London tavern-thieves  
and drabs

To affront the blessed hillside drabs  
and thieves  
With mended morals, quotha, — fine  
new lives! —

My windows paid for't. I was shot at,  
once,  
By an active poacher who had hit a  
hare

From the other barrel, (tired of  
springeing game

So long upon my acres, undisturbed,  
And restless for the country's virtue;  
yet

He missed me) ay, and pelted very  
oft

In riding through the village. 'There  
he goes,  
Who'd drive away our Christian gen-  
tlefolks,

To catch us undefended in the trap  
He baits with poisonous cheese, and  
lock us up

In that pernicious prison of Leigh  
Hall

With all his murderers! Give another  
name,

And say Leigh Hell, and burn it up  
with fire.'

And so they did, at last, Aurora."  
"Did?"

"You never heard it, cousin? Vin-  
cent's news  
Came stinted, then."

"They did? They burnt Leigh  
Hall?"

<p>         " You're sorry, dear Aurora? Yes indeed,          They did it perfectly; a thorough work,          And not a failure, this time. Let us grant          'Tis somewhat easier, though, to burn a house          Than build a system; yet that's easy, too —          In a dream. Books, pictures, ay, the pictures! What,          You think your dear Vandykes would give them pause?          Our proud ancestral Leighs, with those peaked beards,          Or bosoms white as foam thrown up on rocks          From the old-spent wave. Such calm defiant looks          They flared up with! now nevermore to twit          The bones in the family vault with ugly death.          Not one was rescued, save the Lady Maud,          Who threw you down, that morning you were born,          The undeniable lineal mouth and chin,          To wear forever for her gracious sake;          For which good deed I saved her: the rest went:          And you, you're sorry, cousin. Well, for me,          With all my phalansterians safely out, (Poor hearts, they helped the burners, it was said,          And certainly a few clapped hands and yelled)          The ruin did not hurt me as it might;          As when, for instance, I was hurt one day,          A certain letter being destroyed. In fact,          To see the great house flare so . . . oaken floors          Our fathers made so fine with rushes once,          Before our mothers furbished them with trains,          Carved wainscoats, panelled walls, (the favorite slide          For draining off a martyr — or a rogue)          The echoing galleries, half a half-mile long,       </p>	<p>         And all the various stairs that took you up,          And took you down, and took you round about          Upon their slippery darkness, recollect,          All helping to keep up one blazing jest;          The flames through all the casements pushing forth          Like red-hot devils erinkled into snakes,          All signifying, 'Look you, Romney Leigh,          We save the people from your saving, here,          Yet so as by fire! we make a pretty show          Besides, — and that's the best you've ever done.'          — To see this, almost moved myself to clap.          The 'vale et plaudé' came too with effect,          When in the roof fell, and the fire that paused,          Stunned momentarily beneath the stroke of slates          And tumbling rafters, rose at once and roared,          And, wrapping the whole house (which disappeared          In a mounting whirlwind of dilated flame),          Blew upward straight its drift of fiery chaff          In the face of heaven . . . which bleached, and ran up higher."            " Poor Romney!"          " Sometimes when I dream," he said,          " I hear the silence after, 'twas so still.          For all those wild beasts, yelling, cursing round,          Were suddenly silent while you counted five, —          So silent that you heard a young bird fall          From the top-nest in the neighboring rookery,          Through edging over-rashly toward the light.          The old rooks had already fled too far          To hear the screech they fled with, though you saw          Some flying still, like scatterings of dead leaves       </p>
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“With one stone stair, symbolic of my life,  
Ascending, winding, leading up to nought.” -- Page 159.

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In autumn-gusts, seen dark against  
the sky,—  
All flying, ousted, like the house of  
Leigh."

"Dear Romney!"

"Evidently 'twould have been  
A fine sight for a poet, sweet, like  
you,  
To make the verse blaze after. I my-  
self,  
Even I, felt something in the grand  
old trees,

Which stood that moment like brute  
Druid gods  
Amazed upon the rim of ruin, where,  
As into a blackened socket, the great  
fire  
Had dropped, still throwing up splin-  
ters now and then  
To show them gray with all their  
centuries,  
Left there to witness that on such a  
day  
The house went out."

"Ah!"

"While you counted five,  
I seemed to feel a little like a Leigh;  
But then it passed, Aurora. A child  
cried,

And I had enough to think of what  
to do  
With all those houseless wretches in  
the dark,  
And ponder where they'd dance the  
next time,—they  
Who had burnt the viol."

"Did you think of that?  
Who burns his viol will not dance, I  
know,  
To cymbals, Romney."

"O my sweet, sad voice,"  
He cried,— "O voice that speaks and  
overcomes!  
The sun is silent; but Aurora speaks."

"Alas!" I said, "I speak I know not  
what:  
I'm back in childhood, thinking as a  
child,  
A foolish fancy—will it make you  
smile?—  
I shall not from the window of my  
room  
Catch sight of those old chimneys  
any more."

"No more," he answered. "If you  
pushed one day

Through all the green hills to our  
fathers' house,  
You'd come upon a great charred cir-  
cle, where  
The patient earth was singed an acre  
round,  
With one stone stair, symbolic of my  
life,  
Ascending, winding, leading up to  
nought.  
'Tis worth a poet's seeing. Will you  
go?"

I made no answer. Had I any right  
To weep with this man, that I dared  
to speak?  
A woman stood between his soul and  
mine,  
And waved us off from touching  
evermore,  
With those unclean white hands of  
hers. Enough.  
We had burnt our viols and were  
silent.

So,

The silence lengthened till it pressed.  
I spoke  
To breathe,— "I think you were ill  
afterward."

"More ill," he answered, "had been  
scarcely ill.

I hoped this feeble fumbling at life's  
knot  
Might end concisely; but I failed to  
die,

As formerly I failed to live, and thus  
Grew willing, having tried all other  
ways,  
To try just God's. Humility's so  
good

When pride's impossible. Mark us,  
how we make  
Our virtues, cousin, from our worn-  
out sins,

Which smack of them from hence-  
forth. Is it right,  
For instance, to wed here while you  
love there?

And yet, because a man sins once, the  
sin  
Cleaves to him in necessity to sin,  
That if he sin not so, to damn him-  
self,

He sins so, to damn others with him-  
self:  
And thus to wed here, loving there,  
becomes

A duty. Virtue buds a dubious leaf

Round mortal brows: your ivy's better, dear.  
 — Yet she, 'tis certain, is my very wife,  
 The very lamb left mangled by the wolves  
 Through my own bad shepherding: and could I choose  
 But take her on my shoulder past this stretch  
 Of rough, uneasy wilderness, poor lamb,  
 Poor child, poor child? Aurora, my beloved,  
 I will not vex you any more to-night; But, having spoken what I came to say,  
 The rest shall please you. What she can in me, —  
 Protection, tender liking, freedom, ease, —  
 She shall have surely, liberally, for her  
 And hers. Aurora. Small amends they'll make  
 For hideous evils which she had not known  
 Except by me, and for this imminent loss,  
 This forfeit presence of a gracious friend,  
 Which also she must forfeit for my sake,  
 Since . . . drop your hand in mine a moment, sweet,  
 We're parting! — Ah, my snowdrop, what a touch,  
 As if the wind had swept it off! you grudge  
 Your gelid sweetness on my palm but so,  
 A moment? angry, that I could not bear  
 You . . . speaking, breathing, living, side by side  
 With some one called my wife . . . and live myself?  
 Nay, be not cruel: you must understand!  
 Your lightest footfall on a floor of mine  
 Would shake the house, my lintel being uncrossed  
 'Gainst angels: henceforth it is night with me.  
 And so, henceforth, I put the shutters up:  
 Auroras must not come to spoil my dark."

He smiled so feebly, with an empty hand  
 Stretched sideways from me — as indeed he looked  
 To any one but me to give him help; And while the moon came suddenly out full,  
 The double-rose of our Italian moons, Sufficient plainly for the heaven and earth,  
 (The stars, struck dumb, and washed away in dew  
 Of golden glory, and the mountains steeped  
 In divine languor) he, the man, appeared  
 So pale and patient, like the marble man  
 A sculptor puts his personal sadness in  
 To join his grandeur of ideal thought — As if his mallet struck me from my height  
 Of passionate indignation, I who had risen  
 Pale, doubting paused. . . . Was Romney mad indeed?  
 Had all this wrong of heart made sick the brain?  
 Then quiet, with a sort of tremulous pride,  
 "Go, cousin," I said coldly: "a farewell  
 Was sooner spoken 'twixt a pair of friends  
 In those old days than seems to suit you now.  
 Howbeit, since then, I've writ a book or two,  
 I'm somewhat dull still in the manly art  
 Of phrase and metaphor. Why, any man  
 Can carve a score of white Loves out of snow,  
 As Buonarroti in my Florence there, And set them on the wall in some safe shade, —  
 As safe, sir, as your marriage! very good;  
 Though if a woman took one from the ledge  
 To put it on the table by her flowers,  
 And let it mind her of a certain friend,  
 'Twould drop at once, (so better) would not bear

Her nail-mark even, where she took  
it up  
A little tenderly (so best, I say:)  
For me, I would not touch the fragile  
thing  
And risk to spoil it half an hour before  
The sun shall shine to melt it: leave  
it there.  
I'm plain at speech, direct in pur-  
pose: when  
I speak, you'll take the meaning as it  
is,  
And not allow for puckerings in the  
silk  
By clever stiches. I'm a woman, sir,  
And use the woman's figures natu-  
rally,  
As you the male license. So, I wish  
you well.  
I'm simply sorry for the griefs you've  
had,  
And not for your sake only, but man-  
kind's.  
This race is never grateful: from the  
first,  
One fills their cup at supper with pure  
wine,  
Which back they give at cross-time  
on a sponge,  
In vinegar and gall."  
"If gratefuller."  
He murmured, "by so much less pitia-  
ble!  
God's self would never have come  
down to die.  
Could man have thanked him for it."  
"Happily  
'Tis patent, that, whatever," I re-  
sumed,  
"You suffered from this thankless-  
ness of men,  
You sink no more than Moses' bul-  
rush-boat  
When once relieved of Moses; for  
you're light.  
You're light, my cousin! which is  
well for you,  
And manly. For myself — now mark  
me, sir,  
They burnt Leigh Hall; but if, con-  
summated  
To devils, heightened beyond Luci-  
fers,  
They had burnt instead a star or two  
of those  
We saw above there just a moment  
back,  
Before the moon abolished them,  
destroyed

And riddled them in ashes through a  
sieve  
On the head of the foundering uni-  
verse — what then?  
If you and I remained still you and I,  
It could not shift our places as mere  
friends,  
Nor render decent you should toss a  
phrase  
Beyond the point of actual feeling! —  
Nay,  
You shall not interrupt me: as you  
said,  
We're parting. Certainly, not once  
nor twice  
To-night you've mocked me some-  
what, or yourself,  
And I, at least, have not deserved it  
so  
That I should meet it unsurprised.  
But now,  
Enough. We're parting . . . parting.  
Cousin Leigh,  
I wish you well through all the acts  
of life  
And life's relations, wedlock not the  
least,  
And it shall 'please me,' in your  
words, to know  
You yield your wife protection, free-  
dom, ease,  
And very tender liking. May you  
live  
So happy with her, Romney, that  
your friends  
Shall praise her for it. Meantime  
some of us  
Are wholly dull in keeping ignorant  
Of what she has suffered by you, and  
what debt  
Of sorrow your rich love sits down to  
pay:  
But, if 'tis sweet for love to pay its  
debt,  
'Tis sweeter still for love to give its  
gift:  
And you, be liberal in the sweeter  
way;  
You can, I think. At least as touches  
me,  
You owe her, cousin Romney, no  
amends.  
She is not used to hold my gown so  
fast  
You need entreat her now to let it  
go:  
The lady never was a friend of mine,  
Nor capable — I thought you knew  
as much —

Of losing for your sake so poor a prize  
As such a worthless friendship. Be  
content,  
Good cousin, therefore, both for her  
and you !  
I'll never spoil your dark, nor dull  
your noon,  
Nor vex you when you're merry or at  
rest:

You shall not need to put a shutter up  
To keep out this Aurora, though your  
north  
Can make Auroras which vex no-  
body,  
Scarcely known from night, I fancied !  
let me add,  
My larks fly higher than some win-  
dows. Well,  
You've read your Leighs. Indeed  
'twould shake a house,  
If such as I came in with outstretched  
hand  
Still warm and thrilling from the  
clasp of one . . .  
Of one we know . . . to acknowledge,  
palm to palm,  
As mistress there, the Lady Walde-  
mar."

"Now God be with us!" . . . with a  
sudden clash  
Of voice he interrupted. "What  
name's that?  
You spoke a name, Aurora."

"Pardon me:  
I would that, Romney, I could name  
your wife  
Nor wound you, yet be worthy."

"Are we mad?"  
He echoed — "wife! mine! Lady  
Waldemar!

I think you said my wife." He  
sprang to his feet,  
And threw his noble head back  
toward the moon,  
As one who swims against a stormy  
sea,  
Then laughed with such a helpless,  
hopeless scorn,  
I stood and trembled.

"May God judge me so!"  
He said at last, — "I came convicted  
here,  
And humbled sorely, if not enough.  
I came,  
Because this woman from her crystal  
soul  
Had shown me something which a  
man calls light;

Because too, formerly, I sinned by  
her,  
As then and ever since I have by  
God,  
Through arrogance of nature, —  
though I loved . . .  
Whom best I need not say, since that  
is writ

Too plainly in the book of my mis-  
deeds:

And thus I came here to abase myself,  
And fasten, kneeling, on her regent  
brows

A garland which I startled thence  
one day

Of her beautiful June youth. But  
here again

I'm baffled, fail in my abasement as  
My aggrandizement: there's no room  
left for me

At any woman's foot who miscon-  
ceives

My nature, purpose, possible actions.  
What!

Are you the Aurora who made large  
my dreams

To frame your greatness? you con-  
ceive so small?

You stand so less than woman through  
being more,

And lose your natural instinct (like a  
beast)

Through intellectual culture? since  
indeed

I do not think that any common she  
Would dare adopt such monstrous  
forgeries

For the legible life-signature of such  
As I, with all my blots, with all my  
blots!

At last, then, peerless cousin, we are  
peers;

At last we're even. Ah, you've left  
your height,

And here upon my level we take  
hands,

And here I reach you to forgive you,  
sweet,

And that's a fall, Aurora. Long ago  
You seldom understood me; but be-  
fore

I could not blame you. Then, you  
only seemed

So high above, you could not see be-  
low;

But now I breathe, — but now I par-  
don! Nay,

We're parting. Dearest, men have  
burnt my house,

Maligned my motives; but not one,  
I swear,  
Has wronged my soul as this Anrora  
has,  
Who called the Lady Waldemar my  
wife."

"Not married to her! Yet you  
said" . . .

"Again?  
Nay, read the lines" (he held a letter  
out)

"She sent you through me."

By the moonlight there  
I tore the meaning out with passion-  
ate haste  
Much rather than I read it. Thus it  
ran.

#### NINTH BOOK.

EVEN thus. I pause to write it out  
at length,  
The letter of the Lady Waldemar.

"I prayed your cousin Leigh to take  
you this;

He says he'll do it. After years of  
love,  
Or what is called so, when a woman  
frets

And fools upon one string of a man's  
name,

And fingers it forever till it breaks,  
He may perhaps do for her such a  
thing,

And she accept it without detriment,  
Although she should not love him  
any more.

And I, who do not love him, nor love  
you,

Nor you, Anrora, choose you shall  
repent

Your most ungracious letter, and con-  
fess,

Constrained by his convictions, (he's  
convinced)

You've wronged me foully. Are you  
made so ill,

You woman, to impute such ill to me?  
We both had mothers, — lay in their  
bosom once.

And, after all, I thank you, Anrora  
Leigh,

For proving to myself that there are  
things

I would not do, — not for my life, nor  
him, —

Though something I have somewhat  
overdone;

For instance, when I went to see the  
gods

One morning on Olympus, with a step  
That shook the thunder from a cer-  
tain cloud,

Committing myself vilely. Could I  
think

The Muse I pulled my heart out from  
my breast

To soften had herself a sort of heart,  
And loved my mortal? He at least  
loved her,

I heard him say so: 'twas my rec-  
ompense,

When, watching at his bedside four-  
teen days,

He broke out ever, like a flame at  
whiles

Between the heats of fever, "Is it  
thou?"

Breathe closer, sweetest mouth!' —  
And when, at last

The fever gone, the wasted face ex-  
tinct,

As if it irked him much to know me  
there,

He said, "'Twas kind, 'twas good,  
'twas womanly,'

(And fifty praises to excuse no love),  
'But was the picture safe he had ven-  
tured for?'

And then, half wandering, — 'I have  
loved her well,

Although she could not love me.'  
'Say instead,'

I answered, 'she does love you.'  
'Twas my turn

To rave: I would have married him  
so changed,

Although the world had jeered me  
properly

For taking up with Cupid at his  
worst,

The silver quiver worn off on his hair.  
'No, no,' he murmured, 'no, she  
loves me not;

Aurora Leigh does better. Bring her  
book

And read it softly, Lady Waldemar,  
Until I thank your friendship more  
for that

Than even for harder service.' So  
I read

Your book, Anrora, for an hour that  
day:

I kept its pauses, marked its emphasis;  
 My voice, empaled upon its hooks of rhyme,  
 Not once would writhe, nor quiver, nor revolt;  
 I read on calmly, — calmly shut it up,  
 Observing, 'There's some merit in the book;  
 And yet the merit in't is thrown away,  
 As chances still with women if we write  
 Or write not: we want string to tie our flowers,  
 So drop them as we walk, which serves to show  
 The way we went. Good-morning, Mister Leigh;  
 You'll find another reader the next time.  
 A woman who does better than to love,  
 I hate; she will do nothing very well:  
 Male poets are preferable, straining less,  
 And teaching more.' I triumphed o'er you both,  
 And left him.  
 "When I saw him afterward,  
 I had read your shameful letter, and my heart.  
 He came with health recovered, strong, though pale, —  
 Lord Howe and he, a courteous pair of friends, —  
 To say what men dare say to women, when  
 Their debtors. But I stopped them with a word,  
 And proved I had never trodden such a road  
 To carry so much dirt upon my shoe.  
 Then, putting into it something of disdain,  
 I asked forsooth his pardon, and my own,  
 For having done no better than to love,  
 And that not wisely, though 'twas long ago,  
 And had been mended radically since.  
 I told him, as I tell you now, Miss Leigh,  
 And proved I took some trouble, for his sake,  
 (Because I knew he did not love the girl)

To spoil my hands with working in the stream  
 Of that poor bubbling nature, till she went,  
 Consigned to one I trusted (my own maid  
 Who once had lived full five months in my house,  
 Dressed hair superbly) with a lavish purse  
 To carry to Australia where she had left  
 A husband, said she. If the creature lied,  
 The mission failed, — we all do fail and lie  
 More or less, — and I'm sorry, which is all  
 Expected from us when we fail the most,  
 And go to church to own it. What I meant  
 Was just the best for him, and me, and her . . .  
 Best even for Marian! — I am sorry for't,  
 And very sorry. Yet my creature said  
 She saw her stop to speak in Oxford Street  
 To one . . . no matter! I had sooner  
 cut  
 My hand off (though 'twere kissed the hour before,  
 And promised a duke's troth-ring for the next)  
 Than crush her silly head with so much wrong.  
 Poor child! I would have mended it with gold,  
 Until it gleamed like St. Sophia's dome  
 When all the faithful troop to morning prayer:  
 But he, he nipped the bud of such a thought  
 With that cold Leigh look which I fancied once,  
 And broke in, 'Henceforth she was called his wife.  
 His wife required no sneer: he was bound  
 To Florence to resume this broken bond;  
 Enough so. Both were happy, he and Howe,  
 To acquit me of the heaviest charge of all' —  
 — At which I shot my tongue against my fly,



And struck him: 'Would he carry, he  
 was just,  
 A letter from me to Aurora Leigh,  
 And ratify from his authentic mouth  
 My answer to her accusation?'—  
 'Yes,  
 If such a letter were prepared in  
 time.'  
 — He's just, your cousin; ay, abhor-  
 rently:  
 He'd wash his hands in blood to keep  
 them clean.  
 And so, cold, courteous, a mere gen-  
 tleman,  
 He bowed, we parted.  
 "Parted. Face no more,  
 Voice no more, love no more! wiped  
 wholly out,  
 Like some ill scholar's scrawl from  
 heart and slate;  
 Ay, spit on, and so wiped out utterly,  
 By some coarse scholar! I have been  
 too coarse.  
 Too human. Have we business, in  
 our rank,  
 With blood i' the veins? I will have  
 henceforth none,  
 Not even to keep the color at m̄y lip.  
 A rose is pink and pretty without  
 blood;  
 Why not a woman? When we've  
 played in vain  
 The game, to adore,— we have re-  
 sources still,  
 And can play on, at leisure, being  
 adored:  
 Here's Smith already swearing at my  
 feet  
 That I'm the typic she. Away with  
 Smith!—  
 Smith smacks of Leigh,— and hence-  
 forth I'll admit  
 No socialist within three erinolines,  
 To live and have his being. But for  
 you,  
 Though insolent your letter and ab-  
 surd,  
 And though I hate you frankly,—  
 take my Smith!  
 For when you have seen this famous  
 marriage tied,  
 A most unspotted Erle to a noble  
 Leigh,  
 (His love astray on one he should not  
 love)  
 Howbeit you may not want his love,  
 beware,  
 You'll want some comfort. So I leave  
 you Smith:

Take Smith! — he talks Leigh's sub-  
 jects, somewhat worse;  
 Adopts a thought of Leigh's, and  
 dwindles it;  
 Goes leagues beyond, to be no inch  
 behind;  
 Will mind you of him, as a shoe-  
 string may  
 Of a man: and women when they are  
 made like you  
 Grow tender to a shoe-string, foot-  
 print even,  
 Adore averted shoulders in a glass,  
 And memories of what, present once,  
 was loathed.  
 And yet you loathed not Romney,  
 though you played  
 At 'fox-and-geese' about him with  
 your soul:  
 Pass over fox, you rub out fox,— ig-  
 nore  
 A feeling, you eradicate it — the act's  
 Identical.  
 "I wish you joy, Miss Leigh,  
 You've made a happy marriage for  
 your friend,  
 And all the honor, well-assorted  
 love,  
 Derives from you who love him, whom  
 he loves!  
 You need not wish *me* joy to think of  
 it,  
 I have so much. Observe, Aurora  
 Leigh,  
 Your droop of eyelid is the same as  
 his,  
 And but for you I might have won  
 his love,  
 And to you I have shown my naked  
 heart;  
 For which three things, I hate, hate,  
 hate you. Hush!  
 Suppose a fourth,— I cannot choose  
 but think  
 That, with him, I were virtuouser  
 than you  
 Without him: so I hate you from  
 this gulf  
 And hollow of my soul which opens  
 out  
 To what, except for you, had been  
 my heaven,  
 And is, instead, a place to curse by!  
 LOVE."  
 An active kind of curse. I stood  
 there cursed,  
 Confounded. I had seized and caught  
 the sense

Of the letter, with its twenty sting-  
ing snakes,  
In a moment's sweep of eyesight, and  
I stood

Dazed. "Ah! not married."  
"You mistake," he said,  
"I'm married. Is not Marian Erle  
my wife?  
As God sees things, I have a wife and  
child;  
And I, as I'm a man who honors  
God,  
Am here to claim them as my child  
and wife.

I felt it hard to breathe, much less to  
speak.  
Nor word of mine was needed. Some  
one else  
Was there for answering. "Rom-  
ney," she began,  
"My great good angel, Romney."  
Then, at first,  
I knew that Marian Erle was beauti-  
ful.  
She stood there, still and pallid as a  
saint,  
Dilated, like a saint in ecstasy,  
As if the floating moonshine inter-  
posed  
Betwixt her foot and the earth, and  
raised her up  
To float upon it. "I had left my  
child,  
Who sleeps," she said, "and, having  
drawn this way,  
I heard you speaking . . . friend!—  
Confirm me now.  
You take this Marian, such as wicked  
men  
Have made her, for your honorable  
wife?"

The thrilling, solemn, proud, pathetic  
voice.  
He stretched his arms out toward  
that thrilling voice,  
As if to draw it on to his embrace.  
—"I take her as God made her, and  
as men  
Must fail to unmake her, for my hon-  
ored wife."

She never raised her eyes, nor took a  
step,  
But stood there in her place, and  
spoke again.  
—"You take this Marian's child,  
which is her shame

In sight of men and women, for your  
child,  
Of whom you will not ever feel  
ashamed?"

The thrilling, tender, proud, pathetic  
voice.  
He stepped on toward it, still with  
outstretched arms,  
As if to quench upon his breast that  
voice.  
—"May God so father me as I do  
him,  
And so forsake me as I let him feel  
He's orphaned haply. Here I take  
the child  
To share my cup, to slumber on my  
knee,  
To play his loudest gambol at my  
foot,  
To hold my finger in the public  
ways,  
Till none shall need inquire, 'Whose  
child is this?'  
The gesture saying so tenderly, 'My  
own.'"

She stood a moment silent in her  
place;  
Then turning toward me very slow  
and cold,  
—"And you,—what say you?—  
will you blame me much,  
If, careful for that outcast child of  
mine,  
I catch this hand that's stretched to  
me and him,  
Nor dare to leave him friendless in  
the world  
Where men have stoned me? Have  
I not the right  
To take so mere an aftermath from  
life,  
Else found so wholly bare? Or is it  
wrong  
To let your cousin, for a generous  
bent,  
Put out his ungloved fingers among  
briers  
To set a tumbling bird's nest some-  
what straight?  
You will not tell him, though we're  
innocent,  
We are not harmless . . . and that  
both our harms  
Will stick to his good, smooth, noble  
life like burrs,  
Never to drop off, though he shakes  
the cloak?"

You've been my friend: you will not  
 now be his?  
 You've known him that he's worthy  
 of a friend,  
 And you're his cousin, lady, after all,  
 And therefore more than free to take  
 his part,  
 Explaining, since the nest is surely  
 spoilt,  
 And Marian what you know her, —  
 though a wife,  
 The world would hardly understand  
 her ease  
 Of being just hurt and honest; while  
 for him,  
 'Twould ever twit him with his bas-  
 tard child  
 And married harlot. Speak while  
 yet there's time.  
 You would not stand and let a good  
 man's dog  
 Turn round and rend him, because  
 his, and reared  
 Of a generous breed; and will you  
 let his act,  
 Because it's generous? Speak. I'm  
 bound to you,  
 And I'll be bound by only you in  
 this."  
 The thrilling, solemn voice, so pas-  
 sionless,  
 Sustained, yet low, without a rise or  
 fall,  
 As one who had authority to speak,  
 And not as Marian.

I looked up to feel  
 If God stood near me, and beheld his  
 heaven  
 As blue as Aaron's priestly robe ap-  
 peared  
 To Aaron when he took it off to die.  
 And then I spoke, — "Accept the  
 gift, I say,  
 My sister Marian, and be satisfied.  
 The hand that gives has still a soul  
 behind  
 Which will not let it quail for having  
 given,  
 Though foolish worldlings talk they  
 know not what  
 Of what they know not. Romney's  
 strong enough  
 For this: do you be strong to know  
 he's strong.  
 He stands on right's side: never  
 flinch for him,  
 As if he stood on the other. You'll  
 be bound  
 By me? I am a woman of repute;

No fly-blow gossip ever specked my  
 life;  
 My name is clean and open as this  
 hand,  
 Whose glove there's not a man dares  
 blab about.  
 As if he had touched it freely. Here's  
 my hand  
 To clasp your hand, my Marian,  
 owned as pure! —  
 As pure, as I'm a woman and a  
 Leigh;  
 And, as I'm both, I'll witness to the  
 world  
 That Romney Leigh is honored in his  
 choice  
 Who chooses Marian for his honored  
 wife."

Her broad wild woodland eyes shot  
 out a light;  
 Her smile was wonderful for rapture.  
 "Thanks,  
 My great Aurora." Forward then  
 she sprang,  
 And, dropping her impassioned span-  
 iel head  
 With all its brown abandonment of  
 curls  
 On Romney's feet, we heard the kisses  
 drawn  
 Through sobs upon the foot, upon the  
 ground —  
 "O Romney! O my angel! O un-  
 changed!  
 Though since we've parted I have  
 passed the grave.  
 But death itself could only better *thee*,  
 Not change thee. *Thee* I do not thank  
 at all:  
 I but thank God who made thee what  
 thou art,  
 So wholly godlike."

When he tried in vain  
 To raise her to his embrace, escaping  
 thence  
 As any leaping fawn from a hunts-  
 man's grasp,  
 She bounded off, and 'lighted beyond  
 reach,  
 Before him, with a staglike majesty  
 Of soft, serene defiance, as she  
 knew  
 He could not touch her, so was toler-  
 ant  
 He had cared to try. She stood there  
 with her great  
 Drowned eyes, and dripping cheeks,  
 and strange sweet smile

That lived through all, as if one held  
 a light  
 Across a waste of waters, — shook  
 her head  
 To keep some thoughts down deeper  
 in her soul, —  
 Then, white and tranquil like a sum-  
 mer-cloud,  
 Which, having rained itself to a tardy  
 peace,  
 Stands still in heaven as if it ruled  
 the day,  
 Spoke out again, — “Although, my  
 generous friend,  
 Since last we met and parted you’re  
 unchanged,  
 And, having promised faith to Marian  
 Erle,  
 Maintain it, as she were not changed  
 at all ;  
 And though that’s worthy, though  
 that’s full of balm  
 To any conscious spirit of a girl  
 Who once has loved you as I loved  
 you once, —  
 Yet still it will not make her . . . if  
 she’s dead,  
 And gone away where none can give  
 or take  
 In marriage, — able to revive, return  
 And wed you, — will it, Romney ?  
 Here’s the point ;  
 My friend, we’ll see it plainer : you  
 and I  
 Must never, never, never join hands  
 so.  
 Nay, let me say it ; for I said it first  
 To God, and placed it, rounded to an  
 oath,  
 Far, far above the moon there, at his  
 feet,  
 As surely as I wept just now at  
 yours, —  
 We never, never, never join hands so.  
 And now, be patient with me : do not  
 think  
 I’m speaking from a false humility.  
 The truth is, I am grown so proud  
 with grief,  
 And He has said so often through his  
 nights  
 And through his mornings, ‘Weep  
 a little still,  
 Thou foolish Marian, because women  
 must,  
 But do not blush at all except for  
 sin,’ —  
 That I, who felt myself unworthy  
 once

Of virtuous Romney and his high-  
 born race,  
 Have come to learn, — a woman, poor  
 or rich,  
 Despised or honored, is a human soul,  
 And what her soul is, that she is  
 herself,  
 Although she should be spit upon of  
 men,  
 As is the pavement of the churches  
 here,  
 Still good enough to pray in. And  
 being chaste  
 And honest, and inclined to do the  
 right,  
 And love the truth, and live my life  
 out green  
 And smooth beneath his steps, I  
 should not fear  
 To make him thus a less uneasy time  
 Than many a happier woman. Very  
 proud  
 You see me. Pardon, that I set a trap  
 To hear a confirmation in your voice,  
 Both yours and yours. It is so good  
 to know  
 ’Twas really God who said the same  
 before ;  
 And thus it is in heaven, that first  
 God speaks,  
 And then his angels. Oh, it does me  
 good,  
 It wipes me clean and sweet from  
 devil’s dirt,  
 That Romney Leigh should think me  
 worthy still  
 Of being his true and honorable wife !  
 Henceforth I need not say, on leaving  
 earth,  
 I had no glory in it. For the rest,  
 The reason’s ready (master, angel,  
 friend,  
 Be patient with me) wherefore you  
 and I  
 Can never, never, never join hands  
 so.  
 I know you’ll not be angry like a man  
 (For *you* are none) when I shall tell  
 the truth,  
 Which is, I do not love you, Romney  
 Leigh,  
 I do not love you. Ah, well ! catch  
 my hands,  
 Miss Leigh, and burn into my eyes  
 with yours, —  
 I swear I do not love him. Did I  
 once ?  
 ’Tis said that women have been  
 bruised to death,

<p>And yet, if once they loved, that love of theirs Could never be drained out with all their blood : I've heard such things and pondered. Did I indeed Love once? or did I only worship? Yes, Perhaps, O friend, I set you up so high Above all actual good, or hope of good, Or fear of evil, all that could be mine, I haply set you above love itself, And out of reach of these poor wo- man's arms, Angelic Romney. What was in my thought? To be your slave, your help, your toy, your tool. To be your love . . . I never thought of that. To give you love . . . still less. I gave you love? I think I did not give you any thing ; I was but only yours,—upon my knees, All yours, in soul and body, in head and heart, — A creature you had taken from the ground, Still crumbling through your fingers to your feet To join the dust she came from. Did I love, Or did I worship? Judge, Aurora Leigh! But, if indeed I loved, 'twas long ago, So long!—before the sun and moon were made, Before the hells were open, ah, be- fore I heard my child cry in the desert night, And knew he had no father. It may be I'm not as strong as other women are, Who, torn and crushed, are not un- done from love. It may be I am colder than the dead, Who, being dead, love always. But for me, Once killed, this ghost of Marian loves no more, No more . . . except the child . . . no more at all. I told your cousin, sir, that I was dead ;</p>	<p>And now she thinks I'll get up from my grave, And wear my chin-cloth for a wed- ding-veil, And glide along the churchyard like a bride, While all the dead keep whispering through the withes, 'You would be better in your place with us, You pitiful corruption!' At the thought, The damps break out on me like lep- rosy, Although I'm clean. Ay, clean as Marian Erle! As Marian Leigh, I know I were not clean: Nor have I so much life that I should love, Except the child. Ah God! I could not bear To see my darling ou a good man's knees, And know by such a look, or such a sigh, Or such a silence, that he thought sometimes. 'This child was fathered by some cursed wretch' . . . For, Romney, angels are less tender- wise Than God and mothers: even <i>you</i> would think What <i>we</i> think never. He is ours, the child; And we would sooner vex a soul in heaven By coupling with it the dead body's thought It left behind it in a last month's grave Than in my child see other than . . . my child. We only never call him fatherless Who has God and his mother. O my babe, My pretty, pretty blossom an ill wind Once blew upon my breast! Can any think I'd have another,—one called hap- pier, A fathered child, with father's love and race That's worn as bold and open as a smile, To vex my darling when he's asked his name</p>
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And has no answer? What! a happier child  
 Than mine, my best, who laughed so loud to-night  
 He could not sleep for pastime? Nay, I swear  
 By life and love, that if I lived like some,  
 And loved like . . . *some*, ay, loved you, Romney Leigh,  
 As some love, (eyes that have wept so much see clear)  
 I've room for no more children in my arms,  
 My kisses are all melted on one mouth,  
 I would not push my darling to a stool  
 To dandle babies. Here's a hand shall keep  
 Forever clean without a marriage-ring,  
 To tend my boy until he cease to need  
 One steadying finger of it, and desert  
 (Not miss) his mother's lap to sit with men.  
 And when I miss him (not he me) I'll come  
 And say, 'Now give me some of Romney's work, —  
 To help your outcast orphans of the world  
 And comfort grief with grief.' For you, meantime,  
 Most noble Romney, wed a noble wife,  
 And open on each other your great souls:  
 I need not farther bless you. If I dared  
 But strain and touch her in her upper sphere  
 And say, 'Come down to Romney — pay my debt!'  
 I should be joyful with the stream of joy  
 Sent through me. But the moon is in my face . . .  
 I dare not, — though I guess the name he loves:  
 I'm learned with my studies of old days,  
 Remembering how he crushed his under lip  
 When some one came and spoke, or did not come:  
 Aurora, I could touch her with my hand,  
 And fly because I dare not."

She was gone.  
 He smiled so sternly that I spoke in haste.  
 "Forgive her — she sees clearly for herself:  
 Her instinct's holy."  
 "I forgive!" he said,  
 "I only marvel how she sees so sure, While others" . . . there he paused, then hoarse, abrupt, —  
 "Aurora, you forgive us, her and me? For her, the thing she sees, poor loyal child,  
 If once corrected by the thing I know, Had been unspoken, since she loves you well,  
 Has leave to love you; while for me, alas!  
 If once or twice I let my heart escape This night . . . remember, where hearts slip and fall  
 They break beside: we're parting, — parting, — ah,  
 You do not love, that you should surely know  
 What that word means. Forgive, be tolerant:  
 It had not been, but that I felt myself So safe in impuissance and despair  
 I could not hurt you, though I tossed my arms  
 And sighed my soul out. The most utter wretch  
 Will choose his postures when he comes to die,  
 However in the presence of a queen; And you'll forgive me some unseemly spasms  
 Which meant no more than dying. Do you think  
 I had ever come here in my perfect mind,  
 Unless I had come here in my settled mind  
 Bound Marian's, — bound to keep the bond, and give  
 My name, my house, my hand, the things I could,  
 To Marian? For even *I* could give as much:  
 Even I, affronting her exalted soul  
 By a supposition that she wanted these,  
 Could act the husband's coat and hat set up  
 To creak i' the wind, and drive the world-crows off  
 From pecking in her garden. Straw can fill

A hole to keep out vermin. Now, at last,  
 I own heaven's angels round her life suffice  
 To fight the rats of our society,  
 Without this Romney. I can see it at last;  
 And here is ended my pretension which  
 The most pretended. Over-prond of course,  
 Even so!—but not so stupid . . . blind . . . that I,  
 Whom thus the great Taskmaster of the world  
 Has set to meditate mistaken work, —  
 My dreary face against a dim blank wall  
 Throughout man's natural lifetime, — could pretend  
 Or wish . . . O love, I have loved you! O my soul,  
 I have lost you! But I swear by all yourself,  
 And all you might have been to me these years  
 If that June morning had not failed my hope,  
 I'm not so bestial to regret that day  
 This night,—this night, which still to you is fair;  
 Nay, not so blind, Anrora. I attest  
 Those stars above us which I cannot see" . . .

"You cannot" . . .  
 "That if Heaven itself should stoop,  
 Remix the lots, and give me another chance,  
 I'd say, 'No other!' I'd record my blank.  
 Anrora never should be wife of mine."

"Not see the stars?"  
 "'Tis worse still not to see  
 To find your hand, although we're parting, dear.  
 A moment let me hold it ere we part;  
 And understand my last words—these at last!—  
 I would not have you thinking when I'm gone  
 That Romney dared to hanker for your love  
 In thought or vision, if attainable,  
 (Which certainly for me it never was)  
 And wished to use it for a dog to-day

To help the blind man stumbling.  
 God forbid!  
 And now I know he held you in his palm,  
 And kept you open-eyed to all my faults,  
 To save you at last from such a dreary end.  
 Believe me, dear, that if I had known,  
 like him,  
 What loss was coming on me, I had done  
 As well in this as he has.—Farewell you  
 Who are still my light,—farewell!  
 How late it is!  
 I know that now. You've been too patient, sweet.  
 I will but blow my whistle toward the lane,  
 And some one comes,—the same who brought me here.  
 Get in. Good-night."  
 "A moment. Heavenly Christ!  
 A moment. Speak once, Romney.  
 'Tis not true.  
 I hold your hands, I look into your face—  
 You see me?"  
 "No more than the blessed stars.  
 Be blessed too, Anrora. Nay, my sweet,  
 You tremble. Tender-hearted! Do you mind  
 Of yore, dear, how you used to cheat old John,  
 And let the mice out slyly from his traps,  
 Until he marvelled at the soul in mice  
 Which took the cheese, and left the snare? The same  
 Dear soft heart always! 'Twas for this I grieved  
 Howe's letter never reached you.  
 Ah, you had heard  
 Of illness, not the issue, not the extent,—  
 My life long sick with tossings up and down,  
 The sudden revulsion in the blazing house,  
 The strain and struggle both of body and soul,  
 Which left fire running in my veins for blood  
 Scaree lacked that thunderbolt of the falling beam  
 Which nicked me on the forehead as I passed

The gallery-door with a burden. Say  
 heaven's bolt,  
 Not William Erle's, not Marian's  
 father's, — tramp  
 And poacher, whom I found for what  
 he was,  
 And, eager for her sake to rescue  
 him,  
 Forth swept from the open highway  
 of the world,  
 Road-dust and all, till, like a wood-  
 land boar  
 Most naturally unwilling to be tamed,  
 He notched me with his tooth. But  
 not a word  
 To Marian! And I do not think, be-  
 sides,  
 He turned the tilting of the beam my  
 way;  
 And if he laughed, as many swear,  
 poor wretch,  
 Nor he nor I supposed the hurt so  
 deep.  
 We'll hope his next laugh may be  
 merrier,  
 In a better cause."  
 "Blind, Romney?"  
 "Ah, my friend,  
 You'll learn to say it in a cheerful  
 voice.  
 I, too, at first desponded. To be  
 blind,  
 Turned out of nature, mulcted as a  
 man,  
 Refused the daily largess of the sun  
 To humble creatures! When the  
 fever's heat  
 Dropped from me, as the flame did  
 from my house,  
 And left me ruined like it, stripped of  
 all  
 The hues and shapes of respectable  
 life,  
 A mere bare blind stone in the blaze  
 of day,  
 A man, upon the outside of the earth,  
 As dark as ten feet under, in the  
 grave, —  
 Why, that seemed hard."  
 "No hope?"  
 "A tear! you weep,  
 Divine Aurora? tears upon my  
 hand!  
 I've seen you weeping for a mouse, a  
 bird, —  
 But, weep for me, Aurora? Yes,  
 there's hope.  
 No hope of sight: I could be  
 learned, dear,

And tell you in what Greek and Latin  
 name  
 The visual nerve is withered to the  
 root,  
 Though the outer eyes appear indif-  
 ferent,  
 Unspotted in their crystals. But  
 there's hope.  
 The spirit, from behind this de-  
 throned sense,  
 Sees, waits in patience till the walls  
 break up  
 From which the bas-relief and fresco  
 have dropt:  
 There's hope. The man here, once so  
 arrogant  
 And restless, so ambitious, for his  
 part,  
 Of dealing with statistically packed  
 Disorders (from a pattern on his nail),  
 And packing such things quite an-  
 other way,  
 Is now contented. From his personal  
 loss  
 He has come to hope for others when  
 they lose,  
 And wear a gladder faith in what we  
 gain . . .  
 Through bitter experience, compeu-  
 sation sweet,  
 Like that tear, sweetest. I am quiet  
 now,  
 As tender surely for the suffering  
 world,  
 But quiet, — sitting at the wall to  
 learn,  
 Content henceforth to do the thing I  
 can;  
 For though as powerless, said I, as a  
 stone,  
 A stone can still give shelter to a  
 worm,  
 And it is worth while being a stone  
 for that.  
 There's hope, Aurora."  
 "Is there hope for me?  
 For me? — and is there room beneath  
 the stone  
 For such a worm? And if I came  
 and said . . .  
 What all this weeping scarce will let  
 me say,  
 And yet what women cannot say at  
 all  
 But weeping bitterly . . . (the pride  
 keeps up  
 Until the heart breaks under it) . . .  
 I love, —  
 I love you, Romney" . . .



"Silence!" he exclaimed.  
"A woman's pity sometimes makes  
her mad.

A man's distraction must not cheat  
his soul  
To take advantage of it. Yet 'tis  
hard—

Farewell, Aurora."

"But I love you, sir;  
And when a woman says she loves a  
man,

The man must hear her, though he  
love her not,

Which . . . hush! . . . he has leave  
to answer in his turn:

She will not surely blame him. As  
for me,

You call it pity, think I'm generous?  
'Twere somewhat easier, for a woman  
proud

As I am, and I'm very vilely proud,  
To let it pass as such, and press on  
you

Love born of pity,—seeing that ex-  
cellent loves

Are born so, often, nor the quicker  
die,—

And this would set me higher by the  
head

Than now I stand. No matter. Let  
the truth

Stand high; Aurora must be humble:  
no,

My love's not pity merely. Obviously  
I'm not a generous woman, never  
was,

Or else, of old, I had not looked so  
near

To weights and measures, grudging  
you the power

To give, as first I scorned your power  
to judge

For me, Aurora. I would have no  
gifts

Forsooth, but God's; and I would use  
*them*, too,

According to my pleasure and my  
choice,

As he and I were equals, you below,  
Excluded from that level of inter-  
change

Admitting benefaction. You were  
wrong

In much? you said so. I was wrong  
in most.

Oh, most! You only thought to res-  
cue men

By half-means, half-way, seeing half  
their wants,

While thinking nothing of your per-  
sonal gain.

But I, who saw the human nature  
broad

At both sides, comprehending too  
the soul's,

And all the high necessities of art,  
Betrayed the thing I saw, and  
wronged my own life

For which I pleaded. Passioned to  
exalt

The artist's instinct in me at the cost  
Of putting down the woman's, I for-  
got

No perfect artist is developed here  
From any imperfect woman. Flower  
from root,

And spiritual from natural, grade by  
grade

In all our life. A handful of the earth  
To make God's image! the despised  
poor earth,

The healthy odorous earth,—I missed,  
with it

The divine breath that blows the nos-  
trils out

To ineffable inflatus,—ay, the breath  
Which love is. Art is much; but love  
is more.

O art, my art, thou'rt much; but love  
is more!

Art symbolizes heaven; but love is  
God,

And makes heaven. I, Aurora, fell  
from mine.

I would not be a woman like the rest,  
A simple woman who believes in  
love,

And owns the right of love because  
she loves,

And, hearing she's beloved, is satis-  
fied

With what contents God: I must  
analyze,

Confront, and question, just as if a  
fly

Refused to warm itself in any sun  
Till such was *in leone*: I must fret,

Forsooth, because the month was  
only May,

Be faithless of the kind of proffered  
love,

And captious, lest it miss my dignity,  
And scornful, that my lover sought a  
wife

To use . . . to use! O Romney, O  
my love!

I am changed since then, changed  
wholly; for indeed

If now you'd stoop so low to take my  
     love,  
 And use it roughly, without stint or  
     spare,  
 As men use common things with more  
     behind,  
 (And, in this, ever would be more be-  
     hind)  
 To any mean and ordinary end,  
 The joy would set me, like a star in  
     heaven,  
 So high up, I should shine because of  
     height,  
 And not of virtue. Yet in one respect,  
 Just one, beloved, I am in no wise  
     changed :  
 I love you, loved you . . . loved you  
     first and last,  
 And love you on forever. Now I  
     know  
 I loved you always, Romney. She  
     who died  
 Knew that, and said so ; Lady Walde-  
     mar  
 Knows that . . . and Marian. I had  
     known the same,  
 Except that I was prouder than I  
     knew,  
 And not so honest. Ay, and as I live,  
 I should have died so, crushing in my  
     hand  
 This rose of love, the wasp inside and  
     all,  
 Ignoring ever to my soul and you  
 Both rose and pain, — except for this  
     great loss,  
 This great despair, — to stand before  
     your face  
 And know you do not see me where I  
     stand.  
 You think, perhaps, I am not changed  
     from pride,  
 And that I chiefly bear to say such  
     words  
 Because you cannot shame me with  
     your eyes ?  
 O calm, grand eyes, extinguished in a  
     storm,  
 Blown out like lights o'er melancholy  
     seas,  
 Though shrieked for by the ship-  
     wrecked ! O my Dark,  
 My Cloud, — to go before me every  
     day,  
 While I go ever toward the wilder-  
     ness, —  
 I would that you could see me bare to  
     the soul !  
 If this be pity, 'tis so for myself,

And not for Romney : *he* can stand  
     alone ;  
 A man like *him* is never overcome :  
 No woman like me counts him pitia-  
     ble  
 While saints applaud him. He mis-  
     took the world ;  
 But I mistook my own heart, and that  
     slip  
 Was fatal. Romney, will you leave  
     me here ?  
 So wrong, so proud, so weak, so un-  
     consoled,  
 So mere a woman ! — and I love you  
     so,  
 I love you, Romney " —  
                     Could I see his face  
 I wept so ? Did I drop against his  
     breast,  
 Or did his arms constrain me ? Were  
     my cheeks  
 Hot, overflowed, with my tears, or  
     his ?  
 And which of our two large explosive  
     hearts  
 So shook me ? That I know not.  
     There were words  
 That broke in utterance . . . melted  
     in the fire ;  
 Embrace that was convulsion . . .  
     then a kiss  
 As long and silent as the ecstatic  
     night,  
 And deep, deep, shuddering breaths,  
     which meant beyond  
 Whatever could be told by word or  
     kiss.  
 But what he said . . . I have written  
     day by day,  
 With somewhat even writing. Did I  
     think  
 That such a passionate rain would  
     intercept  
 And dash this last page ? What he  
     said, indeed,  
 I fain would write it down here like  
     the rest,  
 To keep it in my eyes, as in my ears,  
 The heart's sweet scripture, to be read  
     at night  
 When weary, or at morning when  
     afraid,  
 And lean my heaviest oath on when  
     I swear,  
 That when all's done, all tried, all  
     counted here,  
 All great arts, and all good philoso-  
     phies,

This love just puts its hand out in a dream,  
And straight outstretches all things.

What he said I fain would write. But, if an angel spoke

In thunder, should we haply know much more

Than that it thundered? If a cloud came down

And wrapt us wholly, could we draw its shape,

As if on the outside, and not overcome?

And so he spake. His breath against my face

Confused his words, yet made them more intense,—

(As when the sudden finger of the wind

Will wipe a row of single city lamps To a pure white line of flame, more luminous

Because of obliteration) more intense, The intimate presence carrying in itself

Complete communication, as with souls,

Who, having put the body off, perceive

Through simply being. Thus 'twas granted me

To know he loved me to the depth and height

Of such large natures, ever competent,

With grand horizons by the sea or land,

To love's grand sunrise. Small spheres hold small fires;

But he loved largely, as a man can love,

Who, baffled in his love, dares live his life,

Accept the ends which God loves, for his own,

And lift a constant aspect.

From the day I brought to England my poor searching face,

(An orphan even of my father's grave)

He had loved me, watched me, watched his soul in mine,

Which in me grew and heightened into love.

For he, a boy still, had been told the tale

Of how a fairy bride from Italy,

With smells of oleanders in her hair, Was coming through the vines to touch his hand;

Whereat the blood of boyhood on the palm

Made sudden beats. And when at last I came,

And lived before him, lived, and rarely smiled,

He smiled, and loved me for the thing I was,

As every child will love the year's first flower,

(Not certainly the fairest of the year, But in which the complete year seems to blow)

The poor sad snowdrop, growing between drifts,

Mysterious medium 'twixt the plant and frost,

So faint with winter while so quick with spring,

And doubtful if to thaw itself away With that snow near it. Not that

Romney Leigh Had loved me coldly. If I thought so once,

It was as if I had held my hand in fire,

And shook for cold. But now I understood

Forever, that the very fire and heat Of troubling passion in him burned

him clear,

And shaped to dubious order word and act;

That, just because he loved me over all,—

All wealth, all lands, all social privilege,

To which chance made him unexpected heir,—

And just because on all these lesser gifts,

Constrained by conscience and the sense of wrong,

He had stamped with steady hand God's arrow-mark

Of dedication to the human need,

He thought it should be so, too, with his love.

He, passionately loving, would bring down

His love, his life, his best, (because the best)

His bride of dreams, who walked so still and high

Through flowery poems, as through meadow-grass,

The dust of golden lilies on her feet,  
 That *she* should walk beside him on  
 the rocks  
 In all that claug and hewing out of  
 men,  
 And help the work of help which was  
 his life,  
 And prove he kept back nothing, —  
 not his soul.  
 And when I failed him, — for I failed  
 him, I, —  
 And when it seemed he had missed  
 my love, he thought,  
 "Aurora makes room for a working-  
 noon,"  
 And so, self-girded with torn strips  
 of hope,  
 Took up his life as if it were for death,  
 (Just capable of one heroic aim)  
 And threw it in the thickest of the  
 world,  
 At which men laughed as if he had  
 drowned a dog.  
 No wonder, — since Aurora failed  
 him first!  
 The morning and the evening made  
 his day.

But oh the night! O bitter-sweet! O  
 sweet!  
 O dark, O moon and stars, O ecstasy  
 Of darkness! O great mystery of  
 love,  
 In which absorbed, loss, anguish,  
 treason's self,  
 Enlarges rapture, as a pebble dropt  
 In some full winecup over-brims the  
 wine!  
 While we two sate together, leaned  
 that night  
 So close my very garments crept and  
 thrilled  
 With strange electric life, and both  
 my cheeks  
 Grew red, then pale, with touches  
 from my hair  
 In which his breath was; while the  
 golden moon  
 Was hung before our faces as the  
 badge  
 Of some sublime, inherited despair,  
 Since ever to be seen by only one, —  
 A voice said, low and rapid as a sigh,  
 Yet breaking, I felt conscious, from a  
 smile,  
 "Thank God, who made me blind to  
 make me see!  
 Shine on, Aurora, dearest light of  
 souls,

Which rul'st forevermore both day  
 and night!  
 I am happy,"  
 I flung closer to his breast,  
 As sword that after battle flings to  
 sheath;  
 And, in that hurtle of united souls,  
 The mystic motions which in com-  
 mon moods  
 Are shut beyond our sense broke in  
 on us,  
 And, as we sate, we felt the old earth  
 spin,  
 And all the starry turbulence of  
 worlds  
 Swing round us in their audient cir-  
 cles, till  
 If that same golden moon were over-  
 head  
 Or if beneath our feet, we did not  
 know.

And then calm, equal, smooth with  
 weights of joy,  
 His voice rose, as some chief musi-  
 cian's song  
 Amid the old Jewish temple's Selah-  
 pause,  
 And bade me mark how we two met  
 at last  
 Upon this moon-bathed promontory  
 of earth,  
 To give up much on each side, then  
 take all.  
 "Beloved," it sang, "we must be  
 here to work;  
 And men who work can only work  
 for men,  
 And, not to work in vain, must com-  
 prehend  
 Humanity, and so work humanly,  
 And raise men's bodies still by rais-  
 ing souls,  
 As God did first."  
 "But stand upon the earth,"  
 I said, "to raise them, (this is human  
 too;  
 There's nothing high which has not  
 first been low;  
 My humbleness, said One, has made  
 me great!)  
 As God did last."  
 "And work all silently  
 And simply," he returned, "as God  
 does all;  
 Distort our nature never for our  
 work,  
 Nor count our right hands stronger  
 for being hoofs.

The man most man, with tenderest  
human hands,  
Works best for men, as God in  
Nazareth."

He paused upon the word, and then  
resumed:

"Fewer programmes, we who have  
no prescience.

Fewer systems, we who are held, and  
do not hold.

Less mapping out of masses to be  
saved,

By nations or by sexes. Fourier's  
void,

And Comte absurd, and Cabet,  
puerile.

Subsist no rules of life outside of  
life,

No perfect manners, without Chris-  
tian souls:

The Christ himself had been no Law-  
giver

Unless he had given the life too,  
with the law."

I echoed thoughtfully,—"The man  
most man

Works best for men, and, if most  
man indeed,

He gets his manhood plainest from  
his soul;

While obviously this stringent soul  
itself

Obeys the old law of development,  
The Spirit ever witnessing in ours,

And love, the soul of soul, within the  
soul,

Evolving it sublimely. First, God's  
love."

"And next," he smiled, "the love of  
wedded souls,

Which still presents that mystery's  
counterpart.

Sweet shadow-rose upon the water of  
life,

Of such a mystic substance, Sharon  
gave

A name to! human, vital, fructuous  
rose,

Whose calyx holds the multitude of  
leaves,

Loves filial, loves fraternal, neighbor-  
loves

And civic,—all fair petals, all good  
scents,

All reddened, sweetened, from one  
central Heart!"

"Alas!" I cried, "it was not long  
ago  
You swore this very social rose smelt  
ill."

"Alas!" he answered, "is it a rose at  
all?

The filial's thankless, the fraternal's  
hard,

The rest is lost. I do but stand and  
think,

Across the waters of a troubled life,  
This flower of heaven so vainly over-  
hangs,

What perfect counterpart would be in  
sight

If tanks were clearer. Let us clean  
the tubes,

And wait for rains. O poet, O my  
love,

Since *I* was too ambitious in my  
deed,

And thought to distance all men in  
success,

(Till God came on me, marked the  
place, and said,

'Ill-doer, henceforth keep within this  
line,

Attempting less than others; and I  
stand

And work among Christ's little ones,  
content,)

Come thou, my compensation, my  
dear sight,

My morning-star, my morning! rise  
and shine,

And touch my hills with radiance not  
their own.

Shine out for two, Aurora, and fulfil  
My falling-short that must be! work

for two,

As I, though thus restrained, for two  
shall love!

Gaze on, with inscient vision, toward  
the sun,

And from his visceral heat pluck  
out the roots

Of light beyond him. Art's a ser-  
vice, mark:

A silver key is given to thy clasp,  
And thou shalt stand unwearyed,

night and day,  
And fix it in the hard, slow-turning  
wards,

To open, so, that intermediate door  
Betwixt the different planes of sensu-  
ous form

And form insensuous, that inferior  
men

<p>         May learn to feel on still through          these to those,          And bless thy ministration. The          world waits          For help. Beloved, let us love so          well,          Our work shall still be better for our          love,          And still our love be sweeter for our          work,          And both commended, for the sake of          each,          By all true workers and true lovers          born.          Now press the clarion on thy woman's          lip,          (Love's holy kiss shall still keep con-          secrate)          And breathe thy fine keen breath          along the brass,          And blow all class-walls level as Jeri-          cho's          Past Jordan, crying from the top of          souls,          To souls, that here assembled on          earth's flats,          They get them to some purer emi-          nence          Than any hitherto beheld for clouds!          What height we know not, but the          way we know,          And how, by mounting ever, we at-          tain,          And so climb on. It is the hour for          souls,          That bodies, leavened by the will and          love,          Be lightened to redemption. The          world's old;          But the old world waits the time to          be renewed,       </p>	<p>         Toward which new hearts in individ-          ual growth          Must quicken, and increase to multi-          tude          In new dynasties of the race of men,          Developed whence shall grow spon-          taneously          New churches, new economies, new          laws          Admitting freedom, new societies          Excluding falsehood: HE shall make          all new."       </p> <p>         My Romney!—Lifting up my hand          in his,          As wheeled by seeing spirits toward          the east,          He turned instinctively, where, faint          and far,          Along the tingling desert of the sky,          Beyond the circle of the conscious          hills,          Were laid in jasper-stone as clear as          glass          The first foundations of that new,          near day          Which should be builded out of          heaven to God.          He stood a moment with erected brows          In silence, as a creature might who          gazed,—          Stood calm, and fed his blind, majes-          tic eyes          Upon the thought of perfect noon:          and when          I saw his soul saw,—“Jasper first,”          I said,          “And second, sapphire; third, chalce-          dony;          The rest in order,—last, an ame-          thyst.”       </p>
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## A DRAMA OF EXILE.

SCENE. — *The outer side of the gate of Eden shut fast with cloud, from the depth of which revolves a sword of fire self-moved. ADAM and EVE are seen in the distance, flying along the glare.*

LUCIFER, *alone.*

REJOICE in the clefts of Gehenna,  
My exiled, my host!  
Earth has exiles as hopeless as when a  
Heaven's empire was lost.  
Through the seams of her shaken  
foundations  
Smoke up in great joy!  
With the smoke of your fierce exulta-  
tions  
Deform and destroy!  
Smoke up with your lurid revenges,  
And darken the face  
Of the white heavens, and taunt  
them with changes  
From glory and grace!  
We in falling, while destiny strangles,  
Pull down with us all.  
Let them look to the rest of their  
angels!  
Who's safe from a fall?  
HE saves not. Where's Adam? Can  
pardon  
Requicken that sod?  
Unkinged is the King of the Garden,  
The image of God.  
Other exiles are cast out of Eden,  
More curse has been hurled:  
Come up, O my locusts, and feed in  
The green of the world!  
Come up! we have conquered by  
evil;  
Good reigns not alone:  
I prevail now, and, angel or devil,  
Inherit a throne.

*[In sudden apparition a watch of innumerable angels, rank above rank, slopes up from around the gate to the zenith. The angel GABRIEL descends.]*

Luc. Hail, Gabriel, the keeper of  
the gate!

Now that the fruit is plucked, prince  
Gabriel,  
I hold that Eden is impregnable  
Under thy keeping.

Gab. Angel of the sin,  
Such as thou standest, — pale in the  
drear light  
Which rounds the rebel's work with  
Maker's wrath, —  
Thou shalt be an Idea to all souls,  
A monumental melancholy gloom  
Seen down all ages, whence to mark  
despair,  
And measure out the distances from  
good.

Go from us straightway!

Luc. Wherefore?  
Gab. Lucifer,  
Thy last step in this place trod sor-  
row up.

Recoil before that sorrow, if not this  
sword.

Luc. Angels are in the world:  
wherefore not I?  
Exiles are in the world: wherefore  
not I?

The cursed are in the world: where-  
fore not I?

Gab. Depart!

Luc. And where's the logic of "de-  
part"?

Our lady Eve had half been satis-  
fied

To obey her Maker, if I had not learnt  
To fix my postulate better. Dost  
thou dream

Of guarding some monopoly in heav-  
en

Instead of earth? Why, I can dream  
with thee

To the length of thy wings.

Gab. I do not dream.

This is not heaven, even in a dream,  
nor earth,

As earth was once, first breathed  
among the stars,

Articulate glory from the mouth di-  
vine,

To which the myriad spheres thrilled  
 audibly,  
 Touched like a lute-string, and the  
 sons of God  
 Said AMEN, singing it. I know that  
 this  
 Is earth not new created, but new  
 cursed—  
 This, Eden's gate, not opened, but  
 built up  
 With a final cloud of sunset. Do I  
 dream?  
 Alas, not so! this is the Eden lost  
 By Lucifer the serpent; this the  
 sword  
 (This sword alive with justice and  
 with fire)  
 That smote upon the forehead Luci-  
 fer  
 The angel. Wherefore, angel, go, de-  
 part!  
 Enough is sinned and suffered.  
*Luc.* By no means.  
 Here's a brave earth to sin and suffer  
 on:  
 It holds fast still; it cracks not under  
 curse;  
 It holds like mine immortal. Pres-  
 ently  
 We'll sow it thick enough with graves  
 as green,  
 Or greener certes, than its knowl-  
 edge-tree.  
 We'll have the cypress for the tree of  
 life,  
 More eminent for shadow: for the  
 rest,  
 We'll build it dark with towns and  
 pyramids,  
 And temples, if it please you: we'll  
 have feasts  
 And funerals also, merrymakes and  
 wars,  
 Till blood and wine shall mix, and  
 run along  
 Right o'er the edges. And, good  
 Gabriel,  
 (Ye like that word in heaven), I too  
 have strength,—  
 Strength to behold Him, and not wor-  
 ship Him;  
 Strength to fall from Him, and not  
 cry on Him;  
 Strength to be in the universe, and  
 yet  
 Neither God nor his servant. The  
 red sign  
 Burnt on my forehead, which you  
 taunt me with,

Is God's sign that it bows not unto  
 God,—  
 The potter's mark upon his work to  
 show  
 It rings well to the striker. I and  
 the earth  
 Can bear more curse.  
*Gab.* O miserable earth,  
 O ruined angel!  
*Luc.* Well, and if it be,  
 I CHOSE this ruin: I elected it  
 Of my will, not of service. What I  
 do,  
 I do volitent, not obedient,  
 And overtop thy crown with my de-  
 spair.  
 My sorrow crowns me. Get thee back  
 to heaven,  
 And leave me to the earth, which is  
 mine own  
 In virtue of her ruin, as I hers  
 In virtue of my revolt! turn thou,  
 from both  
 That bright, impassive, passive angel-  
 hood,  
 And spare to read us backward any  
 more  
 Of the spent hallelujahs!  
*Gab.* Spirit of scorn,  
 I might say of unreason, I might  
 say  
 That who despairs, acts; that who  
 acts, connives  
 With God's relations set in time and  
 space;  
 That who elects, assumes a some-  
 thing good  
 Which God made possible; that who  
 lives, obeys  
 The law of a Life-maker . . .  
*Luc.* Let it pass:  
 No more, thou Gabriel! What if I  
 stand up  
 And strike my brow against the crys-  
 talline  
 Roofing the creatures—shall I say,  
 for that,  
 My stature is too high for me to  
 stand,  
 Henceforward I must sit? Sit thou!  
*Gab.* I kneel.  
*Luc.* A heavenly answer. Get thee  
 to thy heaven,  
 And leave my earth to me!  
*Gab.* Through heaven and earth  
 God's will moves freely, and I follow  
 it,  
 As color follows light. He overflows  
 The firmamental walls with deity,



Therefore with love. His lightnings  
go abroad;  
His pity may do so; his angels must  
When'er he gives them charges.

*Luc.* Verily,  
I and my demons, who are spirits of  
scorn,  
Might hold this charge of standing  
with a sword  
'Twi'x man and his inheritance, as  
well  
As the benignest angel of you all.

*Gab.* Thou speakest in the shadow  
of thy change.

If thou hadst gazed upon the face of  
God

This morning for a moment, thou  
hadst known

That only pity fitly can chastise.  
Hate but avenges.

*Luc.* As it is, I know  
Something of pity. When I reeled in  
heaven,

And my sword grew too heavy for  
my grasp,

Stabbing through matter which it  
could not pierce

So much as the first shell of, toward  
the throne;

When I fell back, down, staring up  
as I fell,

The lightnings holding open my  
scathed lids,

And that thought of the infinite of  
God

Hurled after to precipitate descent;  
When countless angel faces still and  
stern

Pressed out upon me from the level  
heavens

Adown the abysmal spaces, and I fell,  
Trampled down by your stillness,  
and struck blind

By the sight within your eyes, —  
'twas then I knew

How ye could pity, my kind angel-  
hood!

*Gab.* Alas, discrowned one, by the  
truth in me

Which God keeps in me, I would  
give away

All — save that truth and his love  
keeping it, —

To lead thee home again into the light,  
And hear thy voice chant with the  
morning stars

When their rays tremble round them  
with much song

Sung in more gladness!

*Luc.* Sing, my morning star!  
Last beautiful, last heavenly, that I  
loved!

If I could drench thy golden locks  
with tears,

What were it to this angel?

*Gab.* What love is.  
And now I have named God.

*Luc.* Yet, Gabriel,  
By the lie in me which I keep myself,  
Thou'rt a false swearer. Were it  
otherwise,

What dost thou here, vouchsafing  
tender thoughts

To that earth-angel or earth-demon  
(which,

Thou and I have not solved the prob-  
lem yet

Enough to argue), that fallen Adam  
there,

That red-clay and a breath, who must,  
forsooth,

Live in a new apocalypse of sense,  
With beauty and music waving in his  
trees,

And running in his rivers, to make  
glad

His soul made perfect? — is it not for  
hope —

A hope within thee deeper than thy  
truth —

Of finally conducting him and his  
To fill the vacant thrones of me and  
mine,

Which affront heaven with their  
vacuity?

*Gab.* Angel, there are no vacant  
thrones in heaven

To suit thy empty words. Glory and  
life

Fulfil their own depletions; and, if  
God

Sighed you far from him, his next  
breath drew in

A compensative splendor up the vast,  
Flushing the starry arteries.

*Luc.* With a change!  
So let the vacant thrones and gardens  
too

Fill as may please you! — and be piti-  
ful,

As ye translate that word, to the de-  
throned

And exiled, — man or angel The fact  
stands,

That I, the rebel, the cast out and  
down,

Am here, and will not go; while there,  
along

The light to which ye flash the desert  
out,  
Flies your adopted Adam, your red-  
clay  
In two kinds, both being flawed.  
Why, what is this?  
Whose work is this? Whose hand  
was in the work?  
Against whose hand? In this last  
strike, methinks,  
I am not a fallen angel!

*Gab.* Dost thou know  
Aught of those exiles?

*Luc.* Ay: I know they have fled  
Silent all day along the wilderness:  
I know they wear, for burden on their  
backs,  
The thought of a shut gate of Para-  
dise,  
And faces of the marshalled cheru-  
bim  
Shining against, not for, them; and I  
know

They dare not look in one another's  
face,  
As if each were a cherub!

*Gab.* Dost thou know  
Aught of their future?

*Luc.* Only as much as this:  
That evil will increase and multiply  
Without a benediction.

*Gab.* Nothing more?

*Luc.* Why, so the angels taunt!  
What should be more?

*Gab.* God is more.

*Luc.* Proving what?

*Gab.* That he is God,  
And capable of saving. Lucifer,  
I charge thee, by the solitude he kept  
Ere he created, leave the earth to  
God!

*Luc.* My foot is on the earth, firm as  
my sin.

*Gab.* I charge thee, by the memory  
of heaven

Ere any sin was done, leave earth to  
God!

*Luc.* My sin is on the earth, to reign  
thereon.

*Gab.* I charge thee, by the choral  
song we sang,

When, up against the white shore of  
our feet,

The depths of the creation swelled and  
brake,

And the new worlds—the beaded  
foam and flower

Of all that coil—roared outward into  
space

On thunder-edges, leave the earth to  
God!

*Luc.* My woe is on the earth, to  
curse thereby.

*Gab.* I charge thee, by that mournful  
morning star

Which trembles . . .

*Luc.* Enough spoken. As the pine  
In norland forest drops its weight of  
snows

By a night's growth, so, growing  
toward my ends

I drop thy counsels. Farewell, Ga-  
briel!

Watch out thy service: I achieve my  
will.

And peradventure in the after-years,  
When thoughtful men shall bend  
their spacious brows

Upon the storm and strife seen every-  
where

To ruffle their smooth manhood, and  
break up

With lurid lights of intermittent  
hope

Their human fear and wrong, they  
may discern

The heart of a lost angel in the earth.

#### CHORUS OF EDEN SPIRITS.

(*Chanting from Paradise, while ADAM and  
EVE fly across the sword-glare.*)

Harken, oh harken! let your souls  
behind you

Turn, gently moved!

Our voices feel along the Dread to  
find you,

O lost, beloved!

Through the thick-shielded and strong-  
marshalled angels

They press and pierce:

Our requiems follow fast on our evan-  
gels:

Voice throbs in verse.

We are but orphaned spirits left in  
Eden

A time ago:

God gave us golden cups, and we  
were bidden

To feed you so.

But now our right hand hath no cup  
remaining,

No work to do;

The mystic hydromel is spilt, and  
staining

The whole earth through,—

Most ineradicable stains, for showing  
(Not interfused!)

That brighter colors were the world's  
foregoing,

Than shall be used.

Harken, oh harken! ye shall harken  
surely,

For years and years,

The noise beside you, dripping coldly,  
purely,

Of spirits' tears.

The yearning to a beautiful denied  
you

Shall strain your powers;

Ideal sweetnesses shall over-glide  
you,

Resumed from ours.

In all your music our pathetic minor

Your ears shall cross,

And all good gifts shall mind you of  
diviner,

With sense of loss.

We shall be near you in your poet-  
languors

And wild extremes,

What time ye vex the desert with  
vain angers,

Or mock with dreams.

And when upon you, weary after  
roaming,

Death's seal is put,

By the foregone ye shall discern the  
coming,

Through eyelids shut.

*Spirits of the trees.*

Hark! the Eden trees are stirring,

Soft and solemn in your hearing, —

Oak and linden, palm and fir,

Tamarisk and juniper,

Each still throbbing in vibration

Since that crowning of creation

When the God-breath spake abroad,

*Let us make man like to God!*

And the pine stood quivering

As the awful word went by,

Like a vibrant music-string

Stretched from mountain-peak to sky;

And the platan did expand

Slow and gradual, branch and head;

And the cedar's strong black shade

Fluttered brokenly and grand:

Grove and wood were swept aslant

In emotion jubilant.

*Voice of the same, but softer.*

Which divine impulsion cleaves

In dim movements to the leaves

Dropt and lifted, dropt and lifted,

In the sunlight greenly sifted, —

In the sunlight and the moonlight

Greenly sifted through the trees.

Ever wave the Eden trees

In the nightlight and the moonlight.

With a ruffling of green branches

Shaded off to resonances,

Never stirred by rain or breeze.

Fare ye well, farewell!

The sylvan sounds, no longer audible,

Expire at Eden's door.

Each footstep of your treading

Treads out some murmur which ye  
heard before.

Farewell! the trees of Eden

Ye shall hear nevermore.

*River-spirits.*

Hark the flow of the four rivers,

Hark the flow!

How the silence round you shivers,

While our voices through it go

Cold and clear!

*A Softer Voice.*

Think a little, while ye hear,

Of the banks

Where the willows and the deer

Crowd in intermingled ranks,

As if all would drink at once

Where the living water runs! —

Of the fishes' golden edges

Flashing in and out the sedges;

Of the swans, on silver thrones,

Floating down the winding  
streams

With impassive eyes turned sho-  
ward,

And a chant of undertones,

And the lotus leaning forward

To help them into dreams!

Fare ye well, farewell!

The river-sounds, no longer audible,

Expire at Eden's door.

Each footstep of your treading

Treads out some murmur which ye  
heard before.

Farewell! the streams of Eden

Ye shall hear nevermore.

*Bird-spirit.*

I am the nearest nightingale

That singeth in Eden after you,

And I am singing loud and true,

And sweet: I do not fail.

I sit upon a cypress-bough,

Close to the gate, and I fling my song

Over the gate, and through the mail

Of the warden angels marshalled  
strong, —

Over the gate, and after you.

And the warden-angels let it pass,

Because the poor brown bird, alas!

Sings in the garden, sweet and true.

And I build my song of high, pure  
notes,

Note over note, height over height,  
Till I strike the arch of the Infinite;  
And I bridge abysmal agonies  
With strong, clear calms of harmonies;  
And something abides, and something floats  
In the song which I sing after you.  
Fare ye well, farewell!  
The creature-sounds, no longer audible,  
Expire at Eden's door.  
Each footstep of your treading  
Treads out some cadence which ye heard before.  
Farewell! the birds of Eden  
Ye shall hear nevermore.

*Flower-spirits.*  
We linger, we linger,  
The last of the throng,  
Like the tones of a singer  
Who loves his own song.  
We are spirit-aromas  
Of blossom and bloom.  
We call your thoughts home, as  
Ye breathe our perfume,  
To the amaranth's splendor  
Afire on the slopes;  
To the lily-bells tender  
And gray heliotropes;  
To the poppy-plains keeping  
Such dream-breath and blee,  
That the angels there stepping  
Grew whiter to see;  
To the nook set with moly,  
Ye jested one day in,  
Till your smile waxed too holy,  
And left your lips praying;  
To the rose in the bower-place,  
That dripped o'er you sleeping  
To the asphodel flower-place,  
Ye walked ankle-deep in.  
We pluck at your raiment,  
We stroke down your hair,  
We faint in our lament,  
And pine into air.  
Fare ye well, farewell!  
The Eden scents, no longer sensible,  
Expire at Eden's door.  
Each footstep of your treading  
Treads out some fragrance which ye knew before.  
Farewell! the flowers of Eden  
Ye shall smell nevermore.

[*There is silence.* ADAM  
and EVE fly on, and  
never look back. Only  
a colossal shadow, as of

*the dark Angel passing  
quickly, is cast upon the  
sword-glare.*

SCENE. — *The extremity of the sword-glare.*

*Adam.* Pausing a moment on this  
outer edge,  
Where the supernal sword-glare cuts  
in light  
The dark exterior desert, hast thou  
strength,  
Beloved, to look behind us to the  
gate?  
*Eve.* Have I not strength to look up  
to thy face?  
*Adam.* We need be strong: you  
spectacle of cloud,  
Which seals the gate up to the final  
doom,  
Is God's seal manifest. There seem  
to lie  
A hundred thunders in it, dark and  
dead,  
The unmolten lightnings vein it motionless;  
And, outward from its depth, the self-  
moved sword  
Swings slow its awful gnomon of red  
fire  
From side to side, in pendulous horror  
slow,  
Across the stagnant ghastly glare  
thrown flat  
On the intermediate ground from that  
to this.  
The angelic hosts, the archangelic  
pumps,  
Thrones, dominations, principedoms,  
rank on rank,  
Rising sublimely to the feet of God,  
On either side, and overhead the gate,  
Show like a glittering and sustained  
smoke  
Drawn to an apex. That their faces  
shine  
Betwixt the solemn clasping of their  
wings  
Clasped high to a silver point above  
their heads,  
We only guess from hence, and not  
discern.  
*Eve.* Though we were near enough  
to see them shine,  
The shadow on thy face were aw-  
fuller  
To me, at least, — to me, — than all  
their light.  
*Adam.* What is this, Eve? Thou  
droppest heavily

In a heap earthward, and thy body  
heaves  
Under the golden floodings of thine  
hair.

*Eve.* O Adam, Adam! by that name  
of Eve, —

Thine Eve, thy life, — which suits me  
little now,  
Seeing that I now confess myself thy  
death

And thine undoer, as the snake was  
mine, —

I do adjure thee put me straight  
away,

Together with my name! Sweet,  
punish me!

O love, be just! and ere we pass be-  
yond

The light cast outward by the fiery  
sword,

Into the dark which earth must be to  
us,

Bruise my head with thy foot, as the  
curse said

My seed shall the first tempter's! —  
strike with curse,

As God struck in the garden! and as  
HE,

Being satisfied with justice and with  
wrath,

Did roll his thunder gentler at the  
close,

Thou, peradventure, mayst at last  
recoil

To some soft need of mercy. Strike,  
my lord!

I, also, after tempting, writhe on the  
ground,

And I would feed on ashes from thine  
hand,

As suits me, O my tempted!

*Adam.* My beloved,  
Mine Eve and life, I have no other  
name

For thee, or for the sun, than what ye  
are, —

My utter life and light! If we have  
fallen,

It is that we have sinned, — we. God  
is just;

And, since his curse doth comprehend  
us both,

It must be that his balance holds the  
weights

Of first and last sin on a level.  
What!

Shall I, who had not virtue to stand  
straight

Among the hills of Eden, here assume

To mend the justice of the perfect  
God,

By piling up a curse upon his curse,  
Against thee, — thee?

*Eve.* For so, perchance, thy God  
Might take thee into grace for scorn-  
ing me,

Thy wrath against the sinner giving  
proof

Of inward abrogation of the sin:  
And so the blessed angels might come  
down

And walk with thee as erst, — I think  
they would, —

Because I was not near to make them  
sad,

Or soil the rustling of their inno-  
cence.

*Adam.* They know me. I am deep-  
est in the guilt,

If last in the transgression.

*Eve.* Thou!  
*Adam.* If God,

Who gave the right and joyaunce of  
the world

Both unto thee and me, gave thee to  
me, —

The best gift last, — the last sin was  
the worst,

Which sinned against more comple-  
ment of gifts

And grace of giving. God! I render  
back

Strong benediction and perpetual  
praise

From mortal feeble lips (as incense-  
smoke

Out of a little censer may fill heaven),  
That thou, in striking my benumbed  
hands,

And forcing them to drop all other  
boons

Of beauty and dominion and delight,  
Hast left this well-beloved Eve, this  
life

Within life, this best gift between  
their palms,

In gracious compensation.

*Eve.* Is it thy voice,  
Or some saluting angel's, calling home  
My feet into the garden?

*Adam.* O my God!  
I, standing here between the glory  
and dark, —

The glory of thy wrath projected forth  
From Eden's wall, the dark of our  
distress,

Which settles a step off in that drear  
world, —

Lift up to thee the hands from whence  
hath fallen  
Only creation's sceptre, thanking thee  
That rather thou hast cast me out  
with *her*  
Than left me lorn of her in Paradise,  
With angel looks and angel songs  
around  
To show the absence of her eyes and  
voice,  
And make society full desertness  
Without her use in comfort.

*Eve.* Where is loss?  
Am I in Eden? Can another speak  
Mine own love's tongue?

*Adam.* Because, with *her*, I stand  
Upright, as far as can be in this fall,  
And look away from heaven which  
doth accuse,  
And look away from earth which  
doth convict,  
Into her face, and crown my dis-  
crowned brow  
Out of her love, and put the thought  
of her

Around me for an Eden full of birds,  
And lift her body up—thus—to my  
heart,  
And with my lips upon her lips—  
thus, thus—

Do quicken and sublimate my mortal  
breath,  
Which cannot climb against the  
grave's steep sides,  
But overtops this grief.

*Eve.* I am renewed.  
My eyes grow with the light which is  
in thine;  
The silence of my heart is full of  
sound.

Hold me up—so! Because I com-  
prehend  
This human love, I shall not be afraid  
Of any human death; and yet, because  
I know this strength of love, I seem  
to know

Death's strength by that same sign.  
Kiss on my lips,  
To shut the door close on my rising  
soul,  
Lest it pass outwards in astonishment,  
And leave thee lonely!

*Adam.* Yet thou liest, *Eve*,  
Bent heavily on thyself across mine  
arm,  
Thy face flat to the sky.

*Eve.* Ay; and the tears  
Running, as it might seem, my life  
from me,

They run so fast and warm. Let me  
lie so,  
And weep so, as if in a dream or  
prayer,  
Unfastening, clasp by clasp, the hard  
tight thought  
Which clipped my heart, and showed  
me evermore  
Loathed of thy justice as I loathe the  
snake,  
And as the pure ones loathe our sin.

To-day,  
All day, beloved, as we fled across  
This desolating radiance cast by  
swords,  
Not suns, my lips prayed soundless  
to myself,  
Striking against each other, "O  
Lord God!"

('Twas so I prayed) "I ask thee by  
my sin,  
And by thy curse, and by thy blame-  
less heavens,

Make dreadful haste to hide me from  
thy face  
And from the face of my beloved  
here

For whom I am no helpmeet, quick  
away  
Into the new dark mystery of death!  
I will lie still there; I will make no  
plaint;

I will not sigh, nor sob, nor speak a  
word,  
Nor struggle to come back beneath  
the sun,

Where, peradventure, I might sin  
anew  
Against thy mercy and his pleasure.  
Death,

Oh, death, whate'er it be, is good  
enough  
For such as I am; while for *Adam*  
here,

No voice shall say again, in heaven or  
earth,  
*It is not good for him to be alone.*"

*Adam.* And was it good for such a  
prayer to pass,  
My unkind *Eve*, betwixt our mutual  
lives?

If I am exiled, must I be bereaved?  
*Eve.* 'Twas an ill prayer: it shall  
be prayed no more.

And God did use it like a foolishness,  
Giving no answer. Now my heart  
has grown  
Too high and strong for such a foolish  
prayer:

Love makes it strong. And since I  
 was the first  
 In the transgression, with a steady  
 foot  
 I will be first to tread from this sword-  
 glare  
 Into the outer darkness of the waste, —  
 And thus I do it.

*Adam.* Thus I follow thee,  
 As erewhile in the sin. — What  
 sounds! what sounds!  
 I feel a music which comes straight  
 from heaven,  
 As tender as a watering dew.

*Eve.* I think  
 That angels, not those guarding Par-  
 adise,  
 But the love angels, who came erst to  
 us,  
 And, when we said "God," fainted  
 unawares  
 Back from our mortal presence unto  
 God,  
 (As if he drew them inward in a  
 breath.)  
 His name being heard of them, — I  
 think that they  
 With sliding voices lean from heaven-  
 ly towers,  
 Invisible, but gracious. Hark — how  
 soft!

## CHORUS OF INVISIBLE ANGELS.

*Faint and tender.*

Mortal man and woman,  
 Go upon your travel!  
 Heaven assist the human  
 Smoothly to unravel  
 All that web of pain  
 Wherein ye are holden.  
 Do ye know our voices  
 Chanting down the Golden?  
 Do ye guess our choice is,  
 Being un beholden,  
 To be harkened by you yet again?

This pure door of opal  
 God hath shut between us, —  
 Us his shining people,  
 You who once have seen us  
 And are blinded new;  
 Yet, across the doorway,  
 Past the silence reaching,  
 Farewells evermore may,  
 Blessing in the teaching,  
 Glide from us to you.

*First semichorus.*  
 Think how erst your Eden,

Day on day succeeding,  
 With our presence glowed.  
 We came as if the heavens were bowed  
 To a milder music rare.  
 Ye saw us in our solemn treading,  
 Treading down the steps of  
 cloud,  
 While our wings, outspreading  
 Double calms of whiteness,  
 Dropped superfluous brightness  
 Down from stair to stair.

*Second semichorus.*

Or oft, abrupt though tender,  
 While ye gazed on space,  
 We flashed our angel-splendor  
 In either human face.  
 With mystic lilies in our hands,  
 From the atmospheric bands,  
 Breaking with a sudden grace,  
 We took you unawares!  
 While our feet struck glories  
 Outward, smooth and fair,  
 Which we stood on floorwise,  
 Platformed in mid-air.

*First semichorus.*

Or oft, when heaven descended,  
 Stood we in our wondering  
 sight  
 In a mute apocalypse  
 With dumb vibrations on our lips  
 From hosannas ended,  
 And grand half-vanishings  
 Of the empyreal things  
 Within our eyes belated,  
 Till the heavenly Infinite,  
 Falling off from the Created,  
 Left our inward contemplation  
 Opened into ministration.

*Chorus.*

Then upon our axle turning  
 Of great joy to sympathy,  
 We sang out the morning  
 Broadening up the sky;  
 Or we drew  
 Our music through  
 The noontide's hush and heat and  
 shine,  
 Informed with our intense Divine!  
 Interrupted vital notes  
 Palpitating hither, thither,  
 Burning out into the ether,  
 Sensible like fiery motes;  
 Or, whenever twilight drifted  
 Through the cedar masses,  
 The globed sun we lifted,  
 Trailing purple, trailing gold,  
 Out between the passes  
 Of the mountains manifold,  
 To anthems slowly sung!

While he, aweary, half in swoon  
 For joy to hear our climbing tune  
 Transpierce the stars' concentric  
 rings,—  
 The burden of his glory flung  
 In broken lights upon our wings.

[*The chant dies away confusedly, and LUCIFER appears.*]

*Luc.* Now may all fruits be pleasant  
 to thy lips,  
 Beautiful Eve! The times have somewhat  
 changed  
 Since thou and I had talk beneath a  
 tree,  
 Albeit ye are not gods yet.

*Eve.* Adam, hold  
 My right hand strongly! It is Lucifer,—

And we have love to lose.

*Adam.* I' the name of God,  
 Go apart from us, O thou Lucifer!  
 And leave us to the desert thou hast  
 made

Out of thy treason. Bring no serpent-  
 slime  
 Athwart this path kept holy to our  
 tears,

Or we may curse thee with their bit-  
 terness.

*Luc.* Curse freely! Curses thicken.  
 Why, this Eve  
 Who thought me once part worthy of  
 her ear,  
 And somewhat wiser than the other  
 beasts,—  
 Drawing together her large globes of  
 eyes,  
 The light of which is throbbing in and  
 out

Their steadfast continuity of gaze,—  
 Knots her fair eyebrows in so hard a  
 knot,

And down from her white heights of  
 womanhood

Looks on me so amazed, I scarce  
 should fear

To wager such an apple as she  
 plucked,

Against one riper from the tree of life,  
 That she could curse too—as a wo-  
 man may—

Smooth in the vowels.

*Eve.* So—speak wickedly:  
 I like it best so. Let thy words be  
 wounds,

For so I shall not fear thy power to  
 hurt;

Trench on the forms of good by open  
 ill,

For so I shall wax strong and grand  
 with scorn,

Scorning myself for ever trusting  
 thee

As far as thinking, ere a snake ate  
 dust,

He could speak wisdom.

*Luc.* Our new gods, it seems,  
 Deal more in thunders than in cour-  
 tesies.

And, sooth, mine own Olympus,  
 which anon

I shall build up to loud-voiced ima-  
 gery

From all the wandering visions of the  
 world,

May show worse railing than our lady  
 Eve

Pours o'er the rounding of her argent  
 arm.

But why should this be? Adam par-  
 doned Eve.

*Adam.* Adam loved Eve. Jehovah  
 pardon both!

*Eve.* Adam forgave Eve, because  
 loving Eve.

*Luc.* So, well. Yet Adam was un-  
 done of Eve,

As both were by the snake: there-  
 fore forgive,

In like wise, fellow-temptress, the  
 poor snake,

Who stung there, not so poorly!

[*Aside.*  
*Eve.* Hold thy wrath,

Beloved Adam! Let me answer him;  
 For this time he speaks truth, which  
 we should hear,

And asks for merey, which I most  
 should grant,

In like wise, as he tells us, in like  
 wise!—

And therefore I thee pardon, Luci-  
 fer,

As freely as the streams of Eden  
 flowed

When we were happy by them. So,  
 depart;

Leave us to walk the remnant of our  
 time

Out mildly in the desert. Do not seek  
 To harm us any more, or scoff at us,

Or, ere the dust be laid upon our face,  
 To find there the communion of the

dust

And issue of the dust. Go!

*Adam.* At once go!



*Luc.* Forgive! and go! Ye images  
of clay,  
Shrunk somewhat in the mould,  
what jest is this?  
What words are these to use? By  
what a thought  
Conceive ye of me? Yesterday — a  
snake!

To-day — what?

*Adam.* A strong spirit.

*Eve.* A sad spirit.

*Adam.* Perhaps a fallen angel. —

Who shall say!

*Luc.* Who told thee, Adam?

*Adam.* Thou! — the prodigy  
Of thy vast brows and melancholy  
eyes,

Which comprehend the heights of  
some great fall.

I think that thou hast one day worn a  
crown

Under the eyes of God.

*Luc.* And why of God?

*Adam.* It were no crown else.

Verily, I think

Thou'rt fallen far. I had not yester-  
day

Said it so surely; but I know to-day  
Grief by grief, sin by sin.

*Luc.* A crown by a crown.

*Adam.* Ay, mock me! now I know  
more than I knew:

Now I know that thou art fallen be-  
low hope

Of final re-ascent.

*Luc.* Because?

*Adam.* Because

A spirit who expected to see God,  
Though at the last point of a million  
years,

Could dare no mockery of a ruined  
man

Such as this Adam.

*Luc.* Who is high and bold, —

Be it said passing, — of a good red  
clay

Discovered on some top of Lebanon,  
Or haply of Aornus, beyond sweep

Of the black eagle's wing. A fur-  
long lower

Had made a meeker king for Eden.  
Soh!

Is it not possible by sin and grief  
(To give the things your names) that  
spirits should rise,

Instead of falling?

*Adam.* Most impossible.

The Highest being the Holy and the  
Glad,

Whoever rises must approach delight  
And sanctity in the act.

*Luc.* Ha, my clay king!  
Thou wilt not rule by wisdom very  
long

The after-generations. Earth, me-  
thinks,

Will disinherit thy philosophy

For a new doctrine suited to thine  
heirs,

And class these present dogmas with  
the rest

Of the old-world traditions, — Eden  
fruits

And Saurian fossils.

*Eve.* Speak no more with him,  
Beloved! it is not good to speak with  
him. —

Go from us, Lucifer, and speak no  
more!

We have no pardon which thou dost  
not scorn,

Nor any bliss, thou seest, for coveting,  
Nor innocence for staining. Being

bereft,

We would be alone. Go!

*Luc.* Ah! ye talk the same,  
All of you, — spirits and clay, — Go,  
and depart!

In heaven they said so, and at Eden's  
gate,

And here re-iterant in the wilderness.

None saith, Stay with me, for thy face  
is fair!

None saith, Stay with me, for thy  
voice is sweet!

And yet I was not fashioned out of  
clay.

Look on me, woman! Am I beauti-  
ful?

*Eve.* Thou hast a glorious darkness.

*Luc.* Nothing more?

*Eve.* I think no more.

*Luc.* False heart, thou thinkest  
more!

Thou canst not choose but think, as I  
praise God,

Unwillingly but fully, that I stand  
Most absolute in beauty. As your-

selves

Were fashioned very good at best, so  
*we*

Sprang very beauteous from the cre-  
ant Word

Which thrilled behind us, God him-  
self being moved

When that august work of a perfect  
shape,

His dignities of sovran angelhood,

Swept out into the universe, divine  
With thunderous movements, earnest  
looks of gods,  
And silver-solemn clash of cymbal  
wings,  
Whereof was I, in motion and in  
form,  
A part not poorest. And yet—yet,  
perhaps,  
This beauty which I speak of is not  
here,  
As God's voice is not here, nor even  
my crown,—

I do not know. What is this thought  
or thing

Which I call beauty? Is it thought  
or thing?

Is it a thought accepted for a thing?  
Or both? or neither?—a pretext, a  
word?

Its meaning flutters in me like a flame  
Under my own breath: my percep-  
tions reel

Forevermore around it, and fall off,  
As if it, too, were holy.

*Eve.* Which it is.

*Adam.* The essence of all beauty  
I call love.

The attribute, the evidence and end,  
The consummation to the inward  
sense,

Of beauty apprehended from without,  
I still call love. As form when  
colorless

Is nothing to the eye,—that pine-tree  
there,

Without its black and green, being  
all a blank,—

So, without love, is beauty undis-  
cerned

In man or angel. Angel! rather ask  
What love is in thee, what love  
moves to thee,

And what collateral love moves on  
with thee;

Then shalt thou know if thou art  
beautiful.

*Luc.* Love! what is love? I lose it.  
Beauty and love

I darken to the image. Beauty—  
love!

*[He fades away, while a  
low music sounds.]*

*Adam.* Thou art pale, *Eve.*

*Eve.* The precipice of ill  
Down this colossal nature dizzies me:  
And hark! the starry harmony re-  
mote

Seems measuring the heights from  
whence he fell.

*Adam.* Think that we have not fall-  
en so! By the hope  
And aspiration, by the love and faith,  
We do exceed the stature of this  
angel.

*Eve.* Happier we are than he is by  
the death.

*Adam.* Or, rather, by the life of the  
Lord God.

How dim the angel grows, as if that  
blast

Of music swept him back into the  
dark!

*[The music is stronger, gath-  
ering itself into uncer-  
tain articulation.]*

*Eve.* It throbs in on us like a plain-  
tive heart,

Pressing with slow pulsations, vibra-  
tive,

Its gradual sweetness through the  
yielding air,

To such expression as the stars may  
use,

Most starry-sweet and strange. With  
every note

That grows more loud the angel  
grows more dim,

Receding in proportion to approach,  
Until he stand afar,—a shade.

*Adam.* Now, words.

#### SONG OF THE MORNING STAR TO LUCIFER.

*He fades utterly away, and vanishes as it  
proceeds.*

Mine orbèd image sinks

Back from thee, back from thee,

As thou art fallen, methinks,

Back from me, back from me.

O my light-bearer,

Could another fairer

Lack to thee, lack to thee?

Ah, ah, Heosphoros!

I loved thee with the fiery love of  
stars

Who love by burning, and by loving  
move

Too near the throned Jehovah not to  
love.

Ah, ah, Heosphoros!

Their brows flash fast on me from  
gliding cars,

Pale-passioned for my loss.

Ah, ah, Heosphoros!

Mine orbèd heats drop cold  
 Down from thee, down from  
 thee,  
 As fell thy grace of old  
 Down from me, down from me.  
 O my light-bearer,  
 Is another fairer  
 Won to thee, won to thee?  
 Ah, ah, Heosphoros,  
 Great love preceded loss,  
 Known to thee, known to thee.  
 Ah, ah!  
 Thou, breathing thy communicable  
 grace  
 Of life into my light,  
 Mine astral faces, from thine angel  
 face  
 Hast inly fed,  
 And flooded me with radiance over-  
 much  
 From thy pure height.  
 Ah, ah!  
 Thou, with calm, floating pinions both  
 ways spread,  
 Erect, irradiated,  
 Didst sting my wheel of glory  
 On, on before thee,  
 Along the Godlight, by a quickening  
 touch!  
 Ha, ha!  
 Around, around, the firmamental  
 ocean  
 I swam expanding with delirious fire!  
 Around, around, around, in blind de-  
 sire  
 To be drawn upward to the Infinite —  
 Ha, ha!  
 Until, the motion flinging out the  
 motion  
 To a keen whirl of passion and  
 avidity,  
 To a dim whirl of languor and delight,  
 I wound in gyant orbits smooth and  
 white  
 With that intense rapidity.  
 Around, around,  
 I wound and interwound,  
 While all the cyclic heavens about me  
 spun.  
 Stars, planets, suns, and moons di-  
 lated broad,  
 Then flashed together into a single  
 sun,  
 And wound, and wound in one:  
 And as they wound I wound, around,  
 around,  
 In a great fire I almost took for God.  
 Ha, ha, Heosphoros!

Thine angel glory sinks  
 Down from me, down from  
 me:  
 My beauty falls, methinks,  
 Down from thee, down from  
 thee.  
 O my light-bearer,  
 O my path-preparer,  
 Gone from me, gone from me!  
 Ah, ah, Heosphoros!  
 I cannot kindle underneath the brow  
 Of this new angel here who is not  
 thou.  
 All things are altered since that time  
 ago;  
 And if I shine at eve, I shall not  
 know.  
 I am strange, I am slow.  
 Ah, ah, Heosphoros!  
 Henceforward, human eyes of lovers  
 be  
 The only sweetest sight that I shall  
 see,  
 With tears between the looks raised  
 up to me,  
 Ah, ah!  
 When, having wept all night, at break  
 of day  
 Above the folded hills, they shall sur-  
 vey  
 My light, a little trembling, in the  
 gray,  
 Ah, ah!  
 And, gazing on me, such shall com-  
 prehend,  
 Through all my piteous pomp at  
 morn or even  
 And melancholy leaning out of  
 heaven,  
 That love, their own divine, may  
 change or end,  
 That love may close in loss!  
 Ah, ah, Heosphoros!

SCENE. — *Farther on. A wild open country  
 seen vaguely in the approaching night.*

*Adam.* How doth the wide and mel-  
 ancholy earth  
 Gather her hills around us, gray and  
 ghast,  
 And stare with blank significance of  
 loss  
 Right in our faces! Is the wind up?  
*Eve.* Nay.  
*Adam.* And yet the cedars and the  
 junipers  
 Roek slowly, through the mist, with-  
 out a sound,

And shapes which have no certainty  
of shape  
Drift dusky in and out between the  
pines,  
And loom along the edges of the hills,  
And lie flat, curdling in the open  
ground,—  
Shadows without a body, which con-  
tract  
And lengthen as we gaze on them.

*Eve.* O life,  
Which is not man's nor angel's!  
What is this?

*Adam.* No cause for fear. The cir-  
cle of God's life  
Contains all life beside.

*Eve.* I think the earth  
Is crazed with curse, and wanders  
from the sense  
Of those first laws affixed to form and  
space  
Or ever she knew sin.

*Adam.* We will not fear:  
We were brave sinning.

*Eve.* Yea, I plucked the fruit  
With eyes upturned to heaven, and  
seeing there  
Our god-thrones, as the tempter said,  
not God.

My heart, which beat then, sinks.  
The sun hath sunk  
Out of sight with our Eden.

*Adam.* Night is near.

*Eve.* And God's curse nearest. Let  
us travel back,  
And stand within the sword-glare till  
we die,  
Believing it is better to meet death  
Than suffer desolation.

*Adam.* Nay, beloved!  
We must not pluck death from the  
Maker's hand,

As erst we plucked the apple: we  
must wait  
Until he gives death, as he gave us life,  
Nor murmur faintly o'er the primal  
gift

Because we spoilt its sweetness with  
our sin.

*Eve.* Ah, ah! dost thou discern  
what I behold?

*Adam.* I see all. How the spirits  
in thine eyes  
From their dilated orbits bound be-  
fore

To meet the spectral Dread!

*Eve.* I am afraid—  
Ah, ah! the twilight bristles wild  
with shapes

Of intermittent motion, aspect vague,  
And mystic bearings, which o'ercreep  
the earth,  
Keeping slow time with horrors in  
the blood.

How near they reach . . . and far!  
How gray they move,  
Treading upon the darkness without  
feet,

And fluttering on the darkness with-  
out wings!  
Some run like dogs, with noses to the  
ground;

Some keep one path, like sheep; some  
rock, like trees;

Some glide, like a fallen leaf; and  
some flow on,

Copious as rivers.

*Adam.* Some spring up like fire;  
And some coil . . .

*Eve.* Ah, ah! dost thou pause to say  
Like what?—coil like the serpent,  
when he fell

From all the emerald splendor of his  
height

And writhed, and could not climb  
against the curse,—

Not a ring's length. I am afraid—  
afraid—

I think it is God's will to make me  
afraid,

Permitting THESE to haunt us in the  
place

Of his beloved angels, gone from us  
Because we are not pure. Dear pity  
of God,

That didst permit the angels to go  
home,

And live no more with us who are not  
pure,

Save us, too, from a loathly company,  
Almost as loathly in our eyes, per-  
haps,

As we are in the purest! Pity us,—  
Us too! nor shut us in the dark,  
away

From verity and from stability,  
Or what we name such through the  
precedence

Of earth's adjusted uses! leave us  
not

To doubt, betwixt our senses and our  
souls,

Which are the more distraught, and  
full of pain,

And weak of apprehension!

*Adam.* Courage, sweet!  
The mystic shapes ebb back from us,  
and drop

With slow concentric movement, each  
on each,  
Expressing wider spaces, and col-  
lapsed  
In lines more definite for imagery  
And clearer for relation, till the  
through  
Of shapeless spectra merge into a few  
Distinguishable phantasms vague and  
grand,  
Which sweep out and around us  
vastly,  
And hold us in a circle and a calm.

*Eve.* Strange phantasms of pale  
shadow! there are twelve.

Thou who didst name all lives, hast  
names for these?

*Adam.* Methinks this is the zodiac  
of the earth,  
Which rounds us with a visionary  
dread,  
Responding with twelve shadowy  
signs of earth,  
In fantasque apposition and ap-  
proach,

To those celestial, constellated twelve  
Which palpitate adown the silent  
nights

Under the pressure of the hand of God  
Stretched wide in benediction. At  
this hour

Not a star prieketh the flat gloom of  
heaven;

But, girdling close our nether wilder-  
ness,

The zodiac-figures of the earth loom  
slow,

Drawn out, as suiteth with the place  
and time,

In twelve colossal shades, instead of  
stars,

Through which the ecliptic line of  
mystery

Strikes bleakly with an unrelenting  
scope,

Foreshowing life and death.

*Eve.* By dream, or sense,  
Do we see this?

*Adam.* Our spirits have climbed  
high

By reason of the passion of our grief,  
And from the top of sense looked  
over sense,

To the significance and heart of  
things,

Rather than things themselves.

*Eve.* And the dim twelve . . .

*Adam.* Are dim exponents of the  
creature-life,

As earth contains it. Gaze on them,  
beloved!

By stricter apprehension of the sight,  
Suggestions of the creatures shall  
assuage

The terror of the shadows; what is  
known

Subduing the unknown, and taming  
it

From all prodigious dread. That  
phantasm, there,

Presents a lion, albeit twenty times

As large as any lion, with a roar

Set soundless in his vibratory jaws,

And a strange horror stirring in his  
mane.

And there a pendulous shadow seems  
to weigh,—

Good against ill, perchance; and  
there a crab

Puts coldly out its gradual shadow-  
claws,

Like a slow blot that spreads, till all  
the ground

Crawled over by it seems to crawl  
itself.

A bull stands horned here, with gib-  
bous glooms;

And a ram likewise; and a scorpion  
writhes

Its tail in ghastly slime, and stings the  
dark.

This way a goat leaps with wild  
blank of beard;

And here fantastic fishes duskly float,  
Using the calm for waters, while their  
fins

Throb out quick rhythms along the  
shallow air.

While images more human—

*Eve.* How he stands,  
That phantasm of a man—who is  
not thou!

Two phantasms of two men!

*Adam.* One that sustains,  
And one that strives, resuming, so,  
the ends

Of manhood's curse of labor.<sup>1</sup> Dost  
thou see

<sup>1</sup> Adam recognizes in *Aquarius* the water-bearer, and *Sagittarius* the archer, distinct types of the man bearing and the man combating,—the passive and active forms of human labor. I hope that the preceding zodiacal signs—transferred to the earthly shadow and representative purpose—of Aries, Taurus, Cancer, Leo, Libra, Scorpio, Capricornus, and Pisces, are sufficiently obvious to the reader.

That phantasm of a woman?

*Eve.* I have seen;  
But look off to those small humani-  
ties<sup>1</sup>

Which draw me tenderly across my  
fear—

Lesser and fainter than my woman-  
hood,

Or yet thy manhood—with strange  
innocence

Set in the misty lines of head and  
hand.

They lean together! I would gaze on  
them

Longer and longer, till my watching  
eyes,

As the stars do in watching any  
thing,

Should light them forward from their  
outline vague

To clear configuration.

[Two spirits, of organic and inorganic  
nature, arise from the ground.]

But what shapes  
Rise up between us in the open space,  
And thrust me into horror, back from  
hope!

*Adam.* Colossal shapes—twin sov-  
ran images,

With a disconsolate, blank majesty  
Set in their wondrous faces; with no  
look,

And yet an aspect,—a significance  
Of individual life and passionate  
ends,

Which overcomes us gazing.

O bleak sound!  
O shadow of sound! O phantasm of  
thin sound!

How it comes, wheeling, as the pale  
moth wheels,—

Wheeling and wheeling in continu-  
ous wail

Around the cyclic zodiac, and gains  
force,

And gathers, settling coldly like a  
moth,

On the wan faces of these images  
We see before us, whereby modified,

It draws a straight line of articulate  
song

From out that spiral faintness of la-  
ment,

And by one voice expresses many  
griefs.

<sup>1</sup> Her maternal instinct is excited by  
*Gemini.*

*First Spirit.*

I am the spirit of the harmless earth.  
God spake me softly out among the  
stars,—

As softly as a blessing of much worth;  
And then his smile did follow, un-  
awares,

That all things fashioned so for use  
and duty

Might shine anointed with his chrism  
of beauty—

Yet I wail!

I drave on with the worlds exult-  
ingly,

Obliquely down the Godlight's  
gradual fall;

Individual aspect and complexity  
Of gyratory orb and interval

Lost in the fluent motion of delight  
Toward the high ends of Being be-  
yond sight—

Yet I wail!

*Second Spirit.*

I am the spirit of the harmless beasts,  
Of flying things, and creeping  
things, and swimming;

Of all the lives, erst set at silent  
feasts,

That found the love-kiss on the gob-  
let brimming,

And tasted in each drop within the  
measure

The sweetest pleasure of their Lord's  
good pleasure—

Yet I wail!

What a full hum of life around his lips  
Bore witness to the fulness of crea-  
tion!

How all the grand words were full-  
laden ships,

Each sailing onward from enuncia-  
tion

To separate existence, and each bear-  
ing

The creature's power of joying, hop-  
ing, fearing!—

Yet I wail!

*Eve.* They wail, beloved! they speak  
of glory and God,

And they wail—wail. That burden  
of the song

Drops from it like its fruit, and heavi-  
ly falls

Into the lap of silence.

*Adam.*

Hark, again!

*First Spirit.*

I was so beautiful, so beautiful,  
My joy stood up within me bold to  
add

A word to God's, and, when his  
work was full,  
To "very good," responded "very  
glad!"  
Filtered through roses, did the light  
enclose me,  
And bunches of the grape swam blue  
across me —

Yet I wail!

*Second Spirit.*

I bounded with my panthers: I re-  
joiced

In my young tumbling lions rolled  
together:

My stag, the river at his fetlocks,  
poised,

Then dipped his antlers through the  
golden weather

In the same ripple which the alliga-  
tor

Left, in his joyous troubling of the  
water —

Yet I wail!

*First Spirit.*

O my deep waters, cataract and flood,  
What wordless triumph did your  
voices render!

O mountain-summits, where the an-  
gels stood,

And shook from head and wing  
thick dews of splendor!

How with a holy quiet did your  
Earthy

Accept that Heavenly, knowing ye  
were worthy! —

Yet I wail!

*Second Spirit.*

O my wild wood-dogs, with your lis-  
tening eyes;

My horses; my ground-eagles, for  
swift fleeing;

My birds, with viewless wing of har-  
monies;

My calm cold fishes of a silver  
being, —

How happy were ye, living and pos-  
sessing,

O fair half-souls capacious of full  
blessing! —

Yet I wail!

*First Spirit.*

I wail, I wail! Now hear my charge  
to-day,

Thou man, thou woman, marked as  
the misdoers

By God's sword at your backs! I  
lent my clay

To make your bodies, which had  
grown more flowers;

And now, in change for what I lent,  
ye give me

The thorn to vex, the tempest-fire to  
cleave me —

And I wail!

*Second Spirit.*

I wail, I wail! Behold ye, that I  
fasten

My sorrow's fang upon your souls  
dishonored?

Accursed transgressors! down the  
steep ye hasten,

Your crown's weight on the world,  
to drag it downward

Unto your ruin. Lo! my lions scent-  
ing

The blood of wars, roar hoarse and  
unrelenting —

And I wail!

*First Spirit.*

I wail, I wail! Do you hear that I  
wail?

I had no part in your transgression  
— none.

My roses on the bough did bud, not  
pale;

My rivers did not loiter in the sun;  
I was obedient. Wherefore in my

centre

Do I thrill at this curse of death and  
winter? —

Do I wail?

*Second Spirit.*

I wail, I wail! I wail in the assault  
Of undeserved perdition, sorely  
wounded!

My nightingale sang sweet without a  
fault;

My gentle leopards innocently  
bounded.

We were obedient. What is this con-  
vulses

Our blameless life with pangs and  
fever-pulses? —

And I wail!

*Eve.* I choose God's thunder and  
his angels' swords

To die by, Adam, rather than such  
words.

Let us pass out, and flee.

*Adam.* We cannot flee.

This zodiac of the creatures' cruelty  
Curls round us, like a river cold and

drear,

And shuts us in, constraining us to  
hear.

*First Spirit.*

I feel your steps, O wandering sin-  
ners, strike

A sense of death to me, and undug graves!  
 The heart of earth, once calm, is trembling like  
 The ragged foam along the ocean-waves;  
 The restless earthquakes rock against each other;  
 The elements moan round me,  
 "Mother, mother" —  
 And I wail!

*Second Spirit.*

Your melancholy looks do pierce me through;  
 Corruption swathes the paleness of your beauty.  
 Why have ye done this thing? What did we do  
 That we should fall from bliss, as ye from duty?  
 Wild shriek the hawks, in waiting for their jesses,  
 Fierce howl the wolves along the wildernesses —

And I wail!

*Adam.* To thee, the Spirit of the harmless earth,  
 To thee, the Spirit of earth's harmless lives,  
 Inferior creatures, but still innocent,  
 Be salutation from a guilty mouth  
 Yet worthy of some audience and respect  
 From you who are not guilty. If we have sinned,  
 God hath rebuked us, who is over us  
 To give rebuke or death, and if ye wail  
 Because of any suffering from our sin, —

Ye who are under and not over us, —  
 Be satisfied with God, if not with us,  
 And pass out from our presence in such peace

As we have left you, to enjoy revenge  
 Such as the heavens have made you.

Verily,

There must be strife between us large as sin.

*Eve.* No strife, mine Adam! Let us not stand high

Upon the wrong we did to reach disdain,

Who rather should be humbler evermore,

Since self-made sadder. Adam, shall I speak,

I who spake once to such a bitter end, —

Shall I speak humbly now, who once was proud?

I, schooled by sin to more humility  
 Than thou hast, O mine Adam, O my king, —

My king, if not the world's?

*Adam.* Speak as thou wilt.

*Eve.* Thus, then, my hand in thine —

. . . Sweet, dreadful Spirits!

I pray you humbly, in the name of God,

Not to say of these tears, which are impure —

Grant me such pardoning grace as can go forth

From clean volitions toward a spotted will,

From the wronged to the wronger, this and no more!

I do not ask more. I am 'ware, indeed,

That absolute pardon is impossible  
 From you to me, by reason of my sin;

And that I cannot evermore, as once,  
 With worthy acceptance of pure joy,  
 Behold the trances of the holy hills  
 Beneath the leaning stars, or watch the vales

Dew-pallid with their morning ecstasy;

Or hear the winds make pastoral peace between

Two grassy uplands; and the river-wells

Work out their bubbling mysteries underground;

And all the birds sing, till, for joy of song,

They lift their trembling wings as if to heave

The too-much weight of music from their heart

And float it up the ether. I am 'ware

That these things I can no more apprehend

With a pure organ into a full delight,  
 The sense of beauty and of melody

Being no more aided in me by the sense

Of personal adjustment to those heights

Of what I see well formed, or hear well tuned,

But rather coupled darkly, and made ashamed

By my percipiency of sin and fall  
 In melancholy of humilant thoughts.



But, oh ! fair, dreadful Spirits — albeit  
 this,  
 Your accusation must confront my  
 soul,  
 And your pathetic utterance and full  
 gaze  
 Must evermore subdue me, — be con-  
 tent !  
 Conquer me gently, as if pitying me,  
 Not to say loving; let my tears fall  
 thick  
 As watering dews of Eden, unre-  
 proached;  
 And, when your tongues reprove me,  
 make me smooth,  
 Not ruffled, — smooth and still with  
 your reproof,  
 And, peradventure, better while more  
 sad.  
 For look to it, sweet Spirits, look well  
 to it,  
 It will not be amiss in you, who kept  
 The law of your own righteousness,  
 and keep  
 The right of your own griefs to  
 mourn themselves,  
 To pity me twice fallen, — from that  
 and this,  
 From joy of place, and also right of  
 wail;  
 “ I wail ” being not for me, — only  
 “ I sin.”  
 Look to it, O sweet Spirits !  
 For was I not,  
 At that last sunset seen in Paradise,  
 When all the westering clouds flashed  
 out in throngs  
 Of sudden angel-faces, face by face,  
 All hushed and solemn, as a thought  
 of God  
 Held them suspended, — was I not,  
 that hour,  
 The lady of the world, princess of  
 life,  
 Mistress of feast and favor ? Could  
 I touch  
 A rose with my white hand, but it be-  
 came  
 Redder at once ? Could I walk leis-  
 urely  
 Along our swarded garden, but the  
 grass  
 Tracked me with greenness ? Could  
 I stand aside  
 A moment underneath a cornel-tree,  
 But all the leaves did tremble as  
 alive  
 With songs of fifty birds who were  
 made glad

Because I stood there ? Could I turn  
 to look  
 With these twain eyes of mine, — now  
 weeping fast,  
 Now good for only weeping, — upon  
 man,  
 Angel, or beast, or bird, but each re-  
 joiced  
 Because I looked on him ? Alas,  
 alas !  
 “ And is not this much woe, — to ery  
 “ Alas ! ”  
 Speaking of joy ? And is not this  
 more shame, —  
 To have made the woe myself, from  
 all that joy ?  
 To have stretched my hand, and  
 plucked it from the tree,  
 And chosen it for fruit ? Nay, is not  
 this  
 Still most despair, — to have halved  
 that bitter fruit,  
 And ruined so the sweetest friend  
 I have,  
 Turning the GREATEST to mine ene-  
 my ?  
*Adam.* I will not hear thee speak  
 so. Hearken, Spirits !  
 Our God, who is the enemy of none,  
 But only of their sin, hath set your  
 hope  
 And my hope in a promise on this  
 head.  
 Show reverence, then, and never  
 bruise her more  
 With unpermitted and extreme re-  
 proach,  
 Lest, passionate in anguish, she fling  
 down  
 Beneath your trampling feet God’s  
 gift to us  
 Of sovranity by reason and freewill,  
 Sinning against the province of the  
 soul  
 To rule the soulless. Reverence her  
 estate,  
 And pass out from her presence with  
 no words.  
*Eve.* O dearest heart, have patience  
 with my heart !  
 O Spirits, have patience, ’stead of rev-  
 erence,  
 And let me speak; for, not being in-  
 noeent,  
 It little doth become me to be proud,  
 And I am preseient by the very  
 hope  
 And promise set upon me, that hence-  
 forth

Only my gentleness shall make me  
 great,  
 My humbleness exalt me. Awful  
 Spirits,  
 Be witness that I stand in your re-  
 proof  
 But one sun's length off from my  
 happiness —  
 Happy, as I have said, to look around,  
 Clear to look up! — and now! I need  
 not speak —  
 Ye see me what I am: ye scorn me so,  
 Because ye see me what I have made  
 myself  
 From God's best making! Alas, —  
 peace foregone,  
 Love wronged, and virtue forfeit, and  
 tears wept  
 Upon all, vainly! Alas, me! alas,  
 Who have undone myself from all  
 that best,  
 Fairest, and sweetest, to this wretch-  
 edest,  
 Saddest, and most defiled — cast out,  
 cast down —  
 What word metes absolute loss? Let  
 absolute loss  
 Suffice you for revenge. For *I*, who  
 lived  
 Beneath the wings of angels yester-  
 day,  
 Wander to-day beneath the roofless  
 world:  
*I*, reigning the earth's empress yester-  
 day,  
 Put off from me to-day your hate  
 with prayers:  
*I*, yesterday, who answered the Lord  
 God,  
 Composed and glad as singing-birds  
 the sun,  
 Might shriek now from our dismal  
 desert, "God,"  
 And hear him make reply, "What is  
 thy need, —  
 Thou whom I cursed to-day?"  
*Adam.* Eve!  
*Eve.* *I*, at last,  
 Who yesterday was helpmate and de-  
 light  
 Unto mine Adam, am to-day the grief  
 And curse-meet for him. And so  
 pity us,  
 Ye gentle Spirits, and pardon him  
 and me;  
 And let some tender peace, made of  
 our pain,  
 Grow up betwixt us, as a tree might  
 grow,

With boughs on both sides! in the  
 shade of which,  
 When presently ye shall behold us  
 dead,  
 For the poor sake of our humility  
 Breathe out your pardon on our  
 breathless lips,  
 And drop your twilight dews against  
 our brows,  
 And stroking with mild airs our  
 harmless hands  
 Left empty of all fruit, perceive your  
 love  
 Distilling through your pity over us,  
 And suffer it, self-reconciled, to pass!

*LUCIFER rises in the circle.*

*Luc.* Who talks here of a comple-  
 ment of grief?  
 Of expiation wrought by loss and  
 fall?  
 Of hate subduable to pity? Eve?  
 Take counsel from thy counsellor the  
 snake,  
 And boast no more in grief, nor hope  
 from pain,  
 My docile Eve! I teach you to de-  
 spond,  
 Who taught you disobedience. Look  
 around!  
 Earth-spirits and phantasms hear you  
 talk unmoved,  
 As if ye were red clay again, and  
 talked.  
 What are your words to them? your  
 grief to them?  
 Your deaths, indeed, to them? Did  
 the hand pause  
 For *their* sake, in the plucking of the  
 fruit,  
 That they should pause for *you* in  
 hating you?  
 Or will your grief or death, as did  
 your sin,  
 Bring change upon their final doom?  
 Behold,  
 Your grief is but your sin in the re-  
 bound,  
 And cannot expiate for it.  
*Adam.* That is true.  
*Luc.* Ay; that is true. The clay  
 king testifies  
 To the snake's counsel, — hear him! —  
 very true.  
*Earth-spirits.* I wail, I wail!  
*Luc.* And certes, *that* is true.  
 Ye wail, ye all wail. Peradventure I  
 Could wail among you. O thou uni-  
 verse,

That holdest sin and woe, — more  
room for wail!

*Distant Starry Voice.* Ah, ah, Heosphoros! Heosphoros!

*Adam.* Mark Lucifer! He changes awfully.

*Eve.* It seems as if he looked from grief to God,  
And could not see him. Wretched Lucifer!

*Adam.* How he stands — yet an angel!

*Earth-spirits.* We all wail!

*Luc. (after a pause).* Dost thou remember, Adam, when the curse  
Took us in Eden? On a mountain-peak

Half-sheathed in primal woods, and glittering

In spasms of awful sunshine at that hour,

A lion couched, part raised upon his paws,

With his calm, massive face turned full on thine,

And his mane listening. When the ended curse

Left silence in the world, right suddenly

He sprang up rampant, and stood straight and stiff,

As if the new reality of death were dashed against his eyes, and roared so fierce,

(Such thick carnivorous passion in his throat

Tearing a passage through the wrath and fear)

And roared so wild, and smote from all the hills

Such fast keen echoes crumbling down the vales

Precipitately, — that the forest beasts, One after one, did mutter a response

Of savage and of sorrowful complaint Which trailed along the gorges. Then,

at once,

He fell back, and rolled crashing from the height

Into the dusk of pines.

*Adam.* It might have been. I heard the curse alone.

*Earth-spirits.* I wail, I wail!

*Luc.* That lion is the type of what I am.

And as he fixed thee with his full-faced hate,

And roared O Adam, comprehending doom,

So, gazing on the face of the Unseen, I cry out here between the heavens and earth

My conscience of this sin, this woe, this wrath,

Which damn me to this depth.

*Earth-spirits.* I wail, I wail!

*Eve.* I wail — O God!

*Luc.* I scorn you that ye wail, Who use your petty griefs for pedestals

To stand on, beckoning pity from without,

And deal in pathos of antithesis Of what ye *were* forsooth, and what ye are! —

I scorn you like an angel! Yet one cry

I, too, would drive up like a column erect,

Marble to marble, from my heart to heaven,

A monument of anguish to transpierce And overtop your vapory complaints

Expressed from feeble woes.

*Earth-spirits.* I wail, I wail!

*Luc.* For, O ye heavens, ye are my witnesses,

That *I*, struck out from nature in a blot,

The outcast and the mildew of things good,

The leper of angels, the excepted dust Under the common rain of daily gifts, —

I the snake, I the tempter, I the cursed, —

To whom the highest and the lowest alike

Say, Go from us: we have no need of thee, —

Was made by God like others. Good and fair

He did create me! ask him if not fair;

Ask if I caught not fair and silverly His blessing for chief angels on my head

Until it grew there, a crown crystallized;

Ask if he never called me by my name, *Lucifer*, kindly said as “Gabriel” —

*Lucifer*, soft as “Michael!” while serene

I, standing in the glory of the lamps, Answered, “My Father,” innocent of shame

And of the sense of thunder. Ha! ye think,

White angels in your niches, I repent,  
 And would tread down my own offences back  
 To service at the footstool? *That's* read wrong!  
 I cry as the beast did, that I may cry  
 Expansive, not appealing! Fallen so deep,  
 Against the sides of this prodigious pit  
 I cry, cry, dashing out the hands of wail  
 On each side, to meet anguish everywhere,  
 And to attest it in the ecstacy  
 And exaltation of a woe sustained,  
 Because provoked and chosen.

Pass along

Your wilderness, vain mortals! Puny griefs  
 In transitory shapes, be henceforth dwarfed  
 To your own conscience by the dread extremes  
 Of what I am and have been. If ye have fallen,  
 It is but a step's fall, the whole ground beneath  
 Strewn woolly soft with promise: if ye have sinned,  
 Your prayers tread high as angels; if ye have grieved,  
 Ye are too mortal to be pitiable:  
 The power to die disproves the right to grieve.  
 Go to! Ye call this ruin? I half scorn  
 The ill I did you! Were ye wronged by me,  
 Hated and tempted and undone of me,  
 Still, what's your hurt to mine of doing hurt,  
 Of hating, tempting, and so ruining?  
 This sword's *hilt* is the sharpest, and cuts through  
 The hand that wields it.

Go! I curse you all.

Hate one another, — feebly, — as ye can!  
 I would not certes cut you short in hate:  
 Far be it from me! Hate on as ye can!  
 I breathe into your faces, Spirits of earth,  
 As wintry blast may breathe on wintry leaves,

And, lifting up their brownness, show beneath  
 The branches bare. Beseech you, Spirits, give  
 To Eve, who beggarly entreats your love  
 For her and Adam when they shall be dead,  
 An answer rather fitting to the sin  
 Than to the sorrow, as the heavens, I trow,  
 For justice' sake gave theirs.

I curse you both,

Adam and Eve. Say grace, as after meat,  
 After my curses. May your tears fall hot  
 On all the hissing scorns o' the creatures here —  
 And yet rejoice! Increase and multiply,  
 Ye in your generations, in all plagues,  
 Corruptions, melancholies, poverties,  
 And hideous forms of life and fears of death,  
 The thought of death being always eminent,  
 Immovable, and dreadful in your life,  
 And deafly and dumbly insignificant  
 Of any hope beyond, as death itself,  
 Whichever of you lieth dead the first,  
 Shall seem to the survivor, yet rejoice!

My curse catch at you strongly, body and soul,  
 And HE find no redemption, nor the wing  
 Of seraph move your way — and yet rejoice! —  
 Rejoice, because ye have not set in you  
 This hate which shall pursue you, — this fire-hate  
 Which glares without, because it burns within;  
 Which kills from ashes, — this potential hate,  
 Wherein I, angel, in antagonism  
 To God and his reflex beatitudes,  
 Moan ever in the central universe  
 With the great woe of striving against Love,  
 And gasp for space amid the Infinite,  
 And toss for rest amid the Desertness,  
 Self-orphaned by my will, and self-elect  
 To kingship of resistant agony

Toward the Good round me, hating  
good and love,  
And willing to hate good and to hate  
love,  
And willing to will on so evermore,  
Scorning the Past, and damning the  
To come—  
Go and rejoice!— I curse you.

[LUCIFER vanishes.]

*Earth-spirits.*

And we scorn you! There's no par-  
don  
Which can lean to you aright.  
When your bodies take the guerdon  
Of the death-curse in our sight,  
Then the bee that hummeth lowest  
shall transcend you;  
Then ye shall not move an eyelid,  
Though the stars look down your  
eyes;  
And the earth which ye defiled  
Shall expose you to the skies,—  
"Lo! these kings of ours, who sought  
to comprehend you."

*First Spirit.*

And the elements shall boldly  
All your dust to dust constrain.  
Unresistedly and coldly  
I will smite you with my rain.  
From the slowest of my frosts is no  
receding.

*Second Spirit.*

And my little worm, appointed  
To assume a royal part,  
He shall reign, crowned and anoint-  
ed,  
O'er the noble human heart.  
Give him counsel against losing of  
that Eden!

*Adam.* Do ye scorn us? Back your  
scorn

Toward your faces gray and lorn,  
As the wind drives back the rain,  
Thus I drive with passion-strife,—  
I, who stand beneath God's sun,  
Made like God, and, though un-  
done,

Not unmade for love and life.

Lo! ye utter threats in vain.  
By my free will that chose sin,  
By mine agony within  
Round the passage of the fire,  
By the pinings which disclose  
That my native soul is higher  
Than what it chose,  
We are yet too high, O Spirits, for  
your disdain.

*Eve.* Nay, beloved! If these be  
low,

We confront them from no height.  
We have stooped down to their  
level  
By infecting them with evil,  
And their scorn that meets our blow  
Seathes aright.

Amen. Let it be so.

*Earth-spirits.*

We shall triumph, triumph greatly.  
When ye lie beneath the sword.  
There our lily shall grow stately,  
Though ye answer not a word,  
And her fragrance shall be scornful of  
your silence:  
While your throne ascending calu-  
ly,  
We, in heirdom of your soul,  
Flash the river, lift the palm-tree,  
The dilated ocean roll,  
By the thoughts that throbbed within  
you, round the islands.

Alp and torrent shall inherit  
Your significance of will,  
And the grandeur of your spirit  
Shall our broad savannahs fill;  
In our winds your exultations shall  
be springing.  
Even your parlance, which invei-  
gles,  
By our rudeness shall be won.  
Hearts poetic in our eagles  
Shall beat up against the sun,  
And strike downward in articulate  
clear singing.

Your bold speeches our Behemoth  
With his thunderous jaw shall  
wield.  
Your high fancies shall our Mam-  
moth  
Breathe sublimely up the shield  
Of St. Michael at God's throne, who  
waits to speed him,  
Till the heavens' smooth-groovèd  
thunder,  
Spinning back, shall leave them  
clear,  
And the angels, smiling wonder  
With dropt looks from sphere to  
sphere,  
Shall cry, "Ho, ye heirs of Adam! ye  
exceed him."

*Adam.* Root out thine eyes, sweet,  
from the dreary ground!  
Beloved, we may be overcome by  
God,  
But not by these.

*Eve.* By God, perhaps, in these.

*Adam.* I think not so. Had God foredoomed despair,  
He had not spoken hope. He may destroy

Certes, but not deceive.

*Eve.* Behold this rose! I plucked it in our bower of Paradise  
This morning, as I went forth, and my heart

Has beat against its petals all the day.

I thought it would be always red and full,

As when I plucked it. *Is it?* Ye may see.

I cast it down to you that ye may see,  
All of you! Count the petals lost of it,

And note the colors fainted! Ye may see!

And I am as it is, who yesterday  
Grew in the same place. Oh ye Spirits of earth,

I almost, from my miserable heart,  
Could here upbraid you for your cruel heart,

Which will not let me, down the slope  
of death,

Draw any of your pity after me,  
Or lie still in the quiet of your looks,  
As my flower, there, in mine.

[*A bleak wind, quickened with indistinct human voices, spins around the earth-zodiac, filling the circle with its presence, and then, walling off into the east, carries the rose away with it. EVE falls upon her face. ADAM stands erect.*

*Adam.* So, verily,  
The last departs.

*Eve.* So memory follows hope,  
And life both. Love said to me,  
"Do not die,"

And I replied, "O Love, I will not die.

I exiled and I will not orphan Love."  
But now it is no choice of mine to die:

My heart throbs from me.

*Adam.* Call it straightway back!  
Death's consummation crowns completed life,

Or comes too early. Hope being set  
on thee

For others, if for others, then for thee, —

For thee and me.

[*The wind revolves from the east, and*

*round again to the east, perfumed by the Eden-rose, and full of voices which sweep out into articulation as they pass.*

Let thy soul shake its leaves  
To feel the mystic wind — hark!

*Eve.* I hear life.

*Infant Voices passing in the wind.*

Oh, we live! oh, we live!

And this life that we receive  
Is a warm thing and a new,  
Which we softly bud into  
From the heart and from the brain,  
Something strange that overmuch is

Of the sound and of the sight,

Flowing round in trickling touches,

With a sorrow and delight;

Yet is it all in vain?

Rock us softly,

Lest it be all in vain.

*Youthful Voices passing.*

Oh, we live! oh, we live!

And this life that we achieve

Is a loud thing and a bold,

Which, with pulses manifold,

Strikes the heart out full and fain, —

Active doer, noble liver,

Strong to struggle, sure to conquer,

Though the vessel's prow will quiver

At the lifting of the anchor;

Yet do we strive in vain?

*Infant Voices passing.*

Rock us softly,

Lest it be all in vain.

*Poet Voices passing.*

Oh, we live! oh, we live!

And this life that we conceive

Is a clear thing and a fair,

Which we set in crystal air

That its beauty may be plain,

With a breathing and a flooding

Of the heaven-life on the whole,

While we hear the forests budding

To the music of the soul;

Yet is it tuned in vain?

*Infant Voices passing.*

Rock us softly,

Lest it be all in vain.

*Philosophic Voices passing.*

Oh, we live! oh, we live!

And this life that we perceive

Is a great thing and a grave,

Which for others' use we have,

Duty-laden to remain.

We are helpers, fellow-creatures,

Of the right against the wrong,

We are earnest-hearted teachers

Of the truth which maketh strong;

Yet do we teach in vain?

*Infant Voices passing.*

Rock us softly,  
Lest it be all in vain.

*Revel Voices passing.*

Oh, we live! oh, we live!  
And this life that we reprove  
Is a low thing and a light,  
Which is jested out of sight,  
And made worthy of disdain.  
Strike with bold electric laughter  
The high tops of things divine:  
Turn thy head, my brother, after,  
Lest thy tears fall in my wine;  
For is all laughed in vain?

*Infant Voices passing.*

Rock us softly,  
Lest it be all in vain.

*Eve.* I hear a sound of life, — of life  
like ours,

Of laughter and of wailing, of grave  
speech,

Of little plaintive voices innocent,  
Of life in separate courses, flowing  
out

Like our four rivers to some outward  
main.

I hear life — life!

*Adam.* And so thy cheeks have  
snatched

Scarlet to paleness, and thine eyes  
drink fast

Of glory from full cups, and thy moist  
lips

Seem trembling, both of them, with  
earnest doubts

Whether to utter words, or only  
smile.

*Eve.* Shall I be mother of the com-  
ing life?

Hear the steep generations, how they  
fall

Adown the visionary stairs of Time  
Like supernatural thunders, far, yet  
near,

Sowing their fiery echoes through the  
hills!

Am I a cloud to these, — mother to  
these?

*Earth-spirits.* And bringer of the  
curse upon all these.

[*EVE SINKS DOWN AGAIN.*]

*Poet Voices passing,*

Oh, we live! oh, we live!  
And this life that we conceive  
Is a noble thing and high,  
Which we climb up loftily  
To view God without a stain,  
Till, recoiling where the shade is,  
We retreat our steps again,

And descend the gloomy Hades  
To resume man's mortal pain.  
Shall it be climbed in vain?

*Infant Voices passing.*

Rock us softly,  
Lest it be all in vain.

*Love Voices passing.*

Oh, we live! oh, we live!  
And this life we would retrieve  
Is a faithful thing apart  
Which we love in, heart to heart.  
Until one heart fitteth twain.

"Wilt thou be one with me?"

"I will be one with thee."

"Ha, ha! we love and live!"

Alas! ye love and die.

Shriek — who shall reply?

For is it not loved in vain?

*Infant Voices passing.*

Rock us softly,  
Though it be all in vain.

*Aged Voices passing.*

Oh, we live! oh, we live!

And this life we would sur-  
vive

Is a gloomy thing and brief,  
Which, consummated in grief,  
Leaveth ashes for all gain.

Is it not *all* in vain?

*Infant Voices passing.*

Rock us softly,  
Though it be *all* in vain.

[*Voices die away.*]

*Earth-spirits.* And bringer of the  
curse upon all these.

*Eve.* The voices of foreshown hu-  
manity

Die off: so let me die.

*Adam.*

So let us die,

When God's will soundeth the right  
hour of death.

*Earth-spirits.* And bringer of the  
curse upon all these.

*Eve.* O Spirits! by the gentleness  
ye use

In winds at night, and floating clouds  
at noon,

In gliding waters under lily-leaves,

In chirp of crickets, and the settling  
hush

A bird makes in her nest with feet  
and wings, —

Fulfil your natures now!

*Earth-spirits.* Agreed, allowed!

We gather out our natures like a  
cloud,

And thus fulfil their lightnings!  
Thus, and thus!

Harken, oh, harken to us!

*First Spirit.*

As the storm-wind blows bleakly  
from the norland,  
As the snow-wind beats blindly on  
the moorland,  
As the simoom drives hot across the  
desert,  
As the thunder roars deep in the  
Unmeasured,  
As the torrent tears the ocean-world  
to atoms,  
As the whirlpool grinds it fathoms  
below fathoms,

Thus — and thus !

*Second Spirit.*

As the yellow toad, that spits its poi-  
son chilly,  
As the tiger in the jungle crouching  
stilly,  
As the wild boar, with ragged tusks  
of anger,  
As the wolf-dog, with teeth of glitter-  
ing clangor,  
As the vultures, that scream against  
the thunder,  
As the owlets, that sit, and moan  
asunder;

Thus — and thus !

*Eve.* Adam ! God !

*Adam.* Cruel, unrelenting Spirits !  
By the power in me of the sovran soul,  
Whose thoughts keep pace yet with  
the angel's march,  
I charge you into silence, trample  
you  
Down to obedience. I am king of  
you !

*Earth-spirits.*

Ha, ha ! thou art king !  
With a sin for a crown,  
And a soul undone !  
Thou, the antagonized,  
Tortured, and agonized,  
Held in the ring  
Of the zodiac !  
Now, king, beware !  
We are many and strong,  
Whom thou standest among ;  
And we press on the air,  
And we stifle thee back,  
And we multiply where  
Thou wouldst trample us down  
From rights of our own  
To an utter wrong.  
And from under the feet of thy  
scorn,

O forlorn,  
We shall spring up like corn,  
And our stubble be strong.

*Adam.* God, there is power in thee !  
I make appeal  
Unto thy kingship.

*Eve.* There is pity in THEE,  
O sinned against, great God ! My  
seed, my seed,  
There is hope set on THEE, — I cry to  
thee,  
Thou mystic Seed that shalt be ! —  
leave us not

In agony beyond what we can bear,  
Fallen in debasement below thunder-  
mark,

A mark for scorning, taunted and  
perplexed

By all these creatures we ruled yes-  
terday,

Whom thou, Lord, rulest alway ! O  
my Seed,

Through the tempestous years that  
rain so thick

Betwixt my ghostly vision and thy  
face,

Let me have token ! for my soul is  
bruised

Before the serpent's head is.

[A vision of CHRIST appears in the  
midst of the zodiac, which pales be-  
fore the heavenly light. The Earth-  
spirits grow grayer and fainter.]

CHRIST. I AM HERE !

*Adam.* This is God ! Curse us not,  
God, any more !

*Eve.* But gazing so, so, with om-  
nific eyes,

Lift my soul upward till it touch thy  
feet !

Or lift it only — not to seem too  
proud —

To the low height of some good  
angel's feet,

For such to tread on when he walketh  
straight,

And thy lips praise him !

CHRIST. Spirits of the earth,  
I meet you with rebuke for the re-  
proach

And cruel and unmitigated blame  
Ye cast upon your masters. True,  
they have sinned ;

And true their sin is reckoned into  
loss

For you the sinless. Yet your inno-  
cence,

Which of you praises ? since God  
made your acts

Inherent in your lives, and bound  
your hands



With instincts and imperious sanctities  
 From self-defacement. Which of  
 you disdains  
 These sinners, who in falling proved  
 their height  
 Above you by their liberty to fall?  
 And which of you complains of loss  
 by them,  
 For whose delight and use ye have  
 your life  
 And honor in creation? Ponder it!  
 This regent and sublime Humanity,  
 Though fallen, exceeds you! this  
 shall film your sun,  
 Shall hunt your lightning to its lair  
 of cloud,  
 Turn back your rivers, footpath all  
 your seas,  
 Lay flat your forests, master with a  
 look  
 Your lion at his fasting, and fetch  
 down  
 Your eagle flying. Nay, without this  
 law  
 Of mandom, ye would perish, — beast  
 by beast  
 Devouring, — tree by tree, with stran-  
 gling roots  
 And trunks set tuskwise. Ye would  
 gaze on God  
 With imperceptive blankness up the  
 stars,  
 And mutter, "Why, God, hast thou  
 made us thus?"  
 And, pining to a sallow idiocy,  
 Stagger up blindly against the ends  
 of life,  
 Then stagnate into rottenness, and  
 drop  
 Heavily — poor, dead matter — piece-  
 meal down  
 The abysmal spaces, like a little stone  
 Let fall to chaos. Therefore over you  
 Receive man's sceptre! therefore be  
 content  
 To minister with voluntary grace  
 And melancholy pardon every rite  
 And function in you to the human  
 hand!  
 Be ye to man as angels are to God, —  
 Servants in pleasure, singers of de-  
 light,  
 Suggesters to his soul of higher things  
 Than any of your highest! So at last,  
 He shall look round on you with lids  
 too straight  
 To hold the grateful tears, and thank  
 you well,

And bless you when he prays his  
 secret prayers,  
 And praise you, when he sings his  
 open songs,  
 For the clear song-note he has learnt  
 in you  
 Of purifying sweetness, and extend  
 Across your head his golden fantasies  
 Which glorify you into soul from  
 sense.  
 Go, serve him for such price! That  
 not in vain,  
 Nor yet ignobly, ye shall serve, I place  
 My word here for an oath, mine oath  
 for act  
 To be hereafter. In the name of  
 which  
 Perfect redemption and perpetual  
 grace  
 I bless you through the hope and  
 through the peace  
 Which are mine, — to the love which  
 is myself.  
*Eve.* Speak on still, Christ! Albeit  
 thou bless me not  
 In set words, I am blessed in harken-  
 ing thee —  
 Speak, Christ!  
*CHRIST.* Speak, Adam! Bless the  
 woman, man.  
 It is thine office.  
*Adam.* Mother of the world,  
 Take heart before this Presence! Lo,  
 my voice,  
 Which, naming erst the creatures, did  
 express  
 (God breathing through my breath)  
 the attributes  
 And instincts of each creature in its  
 name,  
 Floats to the same afflatus, — floats  
 and heaves,  
 Like a water-weed that opens to a  
 wave,  
 A full-leaved prophecy affecting thee,  
 Out fairly and wide. Henceforward  
 arise, aspire  
 To all the calms and magnanimities,  
 The lofty uses and the noble ends,  
 The sanctified devotion and full work,  
 To which thou art elect forevermore,  
 First woman, wife, and mother!  
*Eve.* And first in sin.  
*Adam.* And also the sole bearer of  
 the Seed  
 Whereby sin dieth. Raise the majes-  
 ties  
 Of thy disconsolate brows, O well-  
 beloved,

And front with level eyelids the To  
 come,  
 And all the dark o' the world! Rise,  
 woman, rise  
 To thy peculiar and best altitudes  
 Of doing good and of enduring ill,  
 Of comforting for ill, and teaching  
 good,  
 And reconciling all that ill and good  
 Unto the patience of a constant  
 hope,—  
 Rise with thy daughters! If sin  
 came by thee,  
 And by sin, death, the ransom-right-  
 eousness  
 The heavenly life and compensative  
 rest,  
 Shall come by means of thee. If woe  
 by thee  
 Had issue to the world, thou shalt go  
 forth  
 An angel of the woe thou didst  
 achieve,  
 Found acceptable to the world instead  
 Of others of that name, of whose  
 bright steps  
 Thy deed stripped bare the hills. Be  
 satisfied:  
 Something thou hast to bear through  
 womanhood,  
 Peculiar suffering answering to the  
 sin,—  
 Some pang paid down for each new  
 human life,  
 Some weariness in guarding such a  
 life,  
 Some coldness from the guarded,  
 some mistrust  
 From those thou hast too well served,  
 from those beloved  
 Too loyally some treason; feebleness  
 Within thy heart, and cruelty with-  
 out,  
 And pressures of an alien tyranny  
 With its dynastic reasons of larger  
 bones  
 And stronger sinews. But go to!  
 thy love  
 Shall chant itself its own beatitudes  
 After its own life-working. A child's  
 kiss  
 Set on thy sighing lips shall make  
 thee glad;  
 A poor man served by thee shall  
 make thee rich;  
 A sick man helped by thee shall  
 make thee strong;  
 Thou shalt be served thyself by every  
 sense

Of service which thou renderest.  
 Such a crown  
 I set upon thy head,—Christ wit-  
 nessing  
 With looks of prompting love,—to  
 keep thee clear  
 Of all reproach against the sin for-  
 gone,  
 From all the generations which suc-  
 ceed.  
 Thy hand which plucked the apple  
 I clasp close;  
 Thy lips which spake wrong counsel  
 I kiss close;  
 I bless thee in the name of Paradise  
 And by the memory of Edenic joys  
 Forfeit and lost,—by that last cy-  
 press-tree,  
 Green at the gate, which thrilled as  
 we came out;  
 And by the blessed nightingale which  
 threw  
 Its melancholy music after us;  
 And by the flowers, whose spirits full  
 of smells  
 Did follow softly, plucking us behind  
 Back to the gradual banks, and ver-  
 nal bowers,  
 And fourfold river-courses. By all  
 these  
 I bless thee to the contraries of these;  
 I bless thee to the desert and the  
 thorns,  
 To the elemental change and turbu-  
 lence,  
 And to the roar of the estranged  
 beasts,  
 And to the solemn dignities of grief,  
 To each one of these ends, and to  
 their END  
 Of death and the hereafter.  
*Eve.* I accept  
 For me and for my daughters this  
 high part,  
 Which lowly shall be counted. No-  
 ble work  
 Shall hold me in the place of garden  
 rest,  
 And, in the place of Eden's lost de-  
 light,  
 Worthy endurance of permitted pain;  
 While on my longest patience there  
 shall wait  
 Death's speechless angel, smiling in  
 the east  
 Whence cometh the cold wind. I  
 bow myself  
 Humbly henceforward on the ill I  
 did,

That humbleness may keep it in the shade.

Shall it be so? Shall I smile, saying so?

O Seed! O King! O God, who *shalt* be seed, —

What shall I say? As Eden's fountains swelled

Brightly betwixt their banks, so swells my soul

Betwixt thy love and power.

And, sweetest thoughts  
Of foregone Eden, now, for the first time

Since God said "Adam," walking through the trees,

I dare to pluck you, as I plucked ere-while

The lily or pink, the rose or heliotrope.

So pluck I you — so largely — with both hands,

And throw you forward on the outer earth

Wherein we are cast out, to sweeten it.

*Adam.* As thou, Christ, to illumine it, holdest Heaven

Broadly over our heads

[*The CHRIST is gradually transfigured, during the following phrases of dialogue, into humanity and suffering.*

*Eve.* O Saviour Christ,  
Thou standest mute in glory, like the sun!

*Adam.* We worship in thy silence,  
Saviour Christ.

*Eve.* Thy brows grow grander with a forecast woe;

Diviner, with the possible of death.

We worship in thy sorrow, Saviour Christ.

*Adam.* How do thy clear still eyes transpierce our souls,

As gazing *through* them, toward the Father-throne

In a pathological, full Deity,  
Serenely as the stars gaze through the air

Straight on each other!

*Eve.* O pathetic Christ,  
Thou standest mute in glory, like the moon!

CHRIST. Eternity stands always  
fronting God;

A stern colossal image, with blind eyes,

And grand dim lips that murmur evermore,

God, God, God! while the rush of life and death,

The roar of act and thought, of evil and good,

The avalanches of the ruining worlds  
Tolling down space, — the new worlds'

genesis  
Budding in fire, — the gradual humming growth

Of the ancient atoms and first forms of earth,

The slow procession of the swathing seas

And firmamental waters, and the noise

Of the broad, fluent strata of pure air, —

All these flow onward in the intervals  
Of that reiterated sound of — GOD!

Which word innumerable angels  
straightway lift

Wide on celestial altitudes of song  
And choral adoration, and then drop

The burden softly, shutting the last notes

In silver wings. Howbeit, in the noon of time

Eternity shall wax as dumb as death,  
While a new voice beneath the spheres shall cry,

"God! Why hast thou forsaken me,  
my God?"

And not a voice in heaven shall answer it.

[*The transfiguration is complete in sadness.*

*Adam.* Thy speech is of the heavens, yet, O Christ,

Awfully human are thy voice and face!

*Eve.* My nature overcomes me from thine eyes.

CHRIST. In the set noon of time  
shall one from heaven,

An angel fresh from looking upon God,

Descend before a woman, blessing her,

With perfect benediction of pure love,  
For all the world in all its elements,

For all the creatures of earth, air, and sea,

For all men in the body and in the soul,

Unto all ends of glory and sanctity.

*Eve.* O pale pathetic Christ, I worship thee!

I thank thee for that woman!

CHRIST. Then at last,  
 I, wrapping round me your human-  
 ity,  
 Which, being sustained, shall neither  
 break nor burn  
 Beneath the fire of Godhead, will  
 tread earth,  
 And ransom you and it, and set  
 strong peace  
 Betwixt you and its creatures. With  
 my pangs  
 I will confront your sins; and, since  
 those sins  
 Have sunken to all Nature's heart  
 from yours,  
 The tears of my clean soul shall fol-  
 low them,  
 And set a holy passion to work clear  
 Absolute consecration. In my brow  
 Of kingly whiteness shall be crowned  
 anew  
 Your disrowned human nature.  
 Look on me!  
 As I shall be uplifted on a cross  
 In darkness of eclipse and anguish  
 dread,  
 So shall I lift up in my pierced  
 hands, —  
 Not into dark, but light; not unto  
 death,  
 But life, — beyond the reach of guilt  
 and grief,  
 The whole creation. Henceforth in  
 my name  
 Take courage, O thou woman, — man,  
 take hope!  
 Your grave shall be as smooth as  
 Eden's sward  
 Beneath the steps of your prospective  
 thoughts,  
 And, one step past it, a new Eden-  
 gate  
 Shall open on a hinge of harmony,  
 And let you through to mercy. Ye  
 shall fall  
 No more within that Eden, nor pass  
 out  
 Any more from it. In which hope,  
 move on,  
 First sinners and first mourners.  
 Live and love,  
 Doing both nobly, because lowly;  
 Live and work, strongly, because pa-  
 tiently!  
 And, for the deed of death, trust it to  
 God  
 That it be well done, unrepented of,  
 And not to loss. And thence with  
 constant prayers

Fasten your souls so high, that con-  
 tantly  
 The smile of your heroic cheer may  
 float  
 Above all floods of earthly agonies,  
 Purification being the joy of pain!

[*The vision of CHRIST vanishes. ADAM  
 and EVE stand in an ecstasy. The  
 earth-zodiac pales away shade by  
 shade, as the stars, star by star,  
 shine out in the sky; and the fol-  
 lowing chant from the two Earth-  
 spirits (as they sweep back into the  
 zodiac, and disappear with it) ac-  
 companies the process of change.*

*Earth-spirits.*

By the mighty word thus spoken  
 Both for living and for dying,  
 We our homage oath, once broken,  
 Fasten back again in sighing,  
 And the creatures and the elements  
 renew their covenanting.

Here forgive us all our scorning;  
 Here we promise milder duty;  
 And the evening and the morning  
 Shall re-organize in beauty  
 A sabbath day of sabbath joy, for  
 universal chanting.

And if, still, this melancholy  
 May be strong to overcome us;  
 If this mortal and unholy  
 We still fail to cast out from us;  
 If we turn upon you unaware your  
 own dark influences;

If ye tremble when surrounded  
 By our forest pine and palm trees;  
 If we cannot cure the wounded  
 With our gum-trees and our balm-  
 trees;  
 And if your souls all mournfully sit  
 down among your senses, —

Yet, O mortals do not fear us!  
 We are gentle in our languor;  
 Much more good ye shall have near  
 us  
 Than any pain or anger,  
 And our God's refracted blessing in  
 our blessing shall be given.

By the desert's endless vigil  
 We will solemnize your passions;  
 By the wheel of the black eagle  
 We will teach you exaltations,  
 When he sails against the wind, to  
 the white spot up in heaven.

Ye shall find us tender nurses  
 To your weariness of nature,  
 And our hands shall stroke the  
 curse's  
 Dreary furrows from the creature,  
 Till your bodies shall lie smooth in  
 death, and straight and slum-  
 berful.

Then a couch we will provide you  
 Where no summer heats shall  
 dazzle,  
 Strewing on you and beside you  
 Thyme and rosemary and basil,  
 And the yew-tree shall grow over-  
 head to keep all safe and cool.

Till the Holy Blood awaited  
 Shall be chrism around us run-  
 ning,  
 Whereby, newly consecrated,  
 We shall leap up in God's sun-  
 ning,  
 To join the spheric company which  
 purer worlds assemble;

While, renewed by new evangels,  
 Soul-consummated, made glori-  
 ous,  
 Ye shall brighten past the angels,  
 Ye shall kneel to Christ victori-  
 ous,  
 And the rays around his feet beneath  
 your sobbing lips shall trem-  
 ble.

[*The phantastic vision has all passed ;  
 the earth-zodiac has broken like a  
 belt, and is dissolved from the des-  
 ert. The Earth-spirits vanish, and  
 the stars shine out above.*]

CHORUS OF INVISIBLE ANGELS,

*While ADAM and EVE advance into the  
 desert, hand in hand.*

Hear our heavenly promise  
 Through your mortal passion !  
 Love ye shall have from us,  
 In a pure relation.  
 As a fish or bird  
 Swims or flies, if moving,  
 We unseen are heard  
 To live on by loving.  
 Far above the glances  
 Of your eager eyes,  
 Listen ! we are loving.  
 Listen, through man's ignoranees,  
 Listen, through God's mysteries,

Listen, down the heart of things, —  
 Ye shall hear our mystic wings  
 Murmurous with loving.  
 Through the opal door  
 Listen evermore  
 How we live by loving !

*First semichorus.*

When your bodies therefore  
 Reach the grave, their goal,  
 Softly will we care for  
 Each enfranchised soul.  
 Softly and unloathly,  
 Through the door of opal,  
 Toward the heavenly people,  
 Floated on a minor fine  
 Into the full chant divine,  
 We will draw you smoothly,  
 While the human in the minor  
 Makes the harmony diviner.  
 Listen to our loving !

*Second semichorus.*

There, a sigh of glory  
 Shall breathe on you as you come,  
 Ruffling round the doorway  
 All the light of angeldom.  
 From the empyrean centre  
 Heavenly voices shall repeat,  
 "Souls, redeemed and pardoned,  
 enter,  
 For the chrism on you is sweet."  
 And every angel in the place  
 Lowly shall bow his face,  
 Folded fair on softened sounds,  
 Because upon your hands and feet  
 He images his Master's wounds.  
 Listen to our loving !

*First semichorus.*

So, in the universe's  
 Consummated undoing,  
 Our seraphs of white mercies  
 Shall hover round the ruin.  
 Their wings shall stream upon the  
 flame  
 As if incorporate of the same  
 In elemental fusion;  
 And calm their faces shall burn out  
 With a pale and mastering thought,  
 And a steadfast looking of desire  
 From out between the clefts of fire,  
 While they cry, in the Holy's name,  
 To the final Restitution.  
 Listen to our loving !

*Second semichorus.*

So, when the day of God is  
 To the thick graves accompted,  
 Awaking the dead bodies,  
 The angel of the trumpet  
 Shall split and shatter the earth  
 To the roots of the grave

Which never before were slackened,  
And quicken the charnel birth  
With his blast so clear and brave  
That the dead shall start, and  
stand erect,

And every face of the burial-place  
Shall the awful single look reflect  
Wherewith he them awakened.  
Listen to our loving!

*First semichorus.*

But wild is the horse of Death.  
He will leap up wild at the clamor  
Above and beneath.  
And where is his Tamer  
On that last day,  
When he crieth, Ha, ha!  
To the trumpet's blare,  
And paweth the earth's Aceldama?  
When he tosseth his head,  
The drear-white steed,  
And ghastlily champeth the last  
moon-ray,  
What angel there  
Can lead him away,  
That the living may rule for the  
dead?

*Second semichorus.*

Yet a TAMER shall be found!  
One more bright than seraph  
crowned,  
And more strong than cherub bold,  
Elder, too, than angel old,  
By his gray eternities.  
He shall master and surprise  
The steed of Death.  
For he is strong, and he is fain:  
He shall quell him with a breath,  
And shall lead him where he will,  
With a whisper in the ear,  
Full of fear,  
And a hand upon the mane,  
Grand and still.

*First semichorus.*

Through the flats of Hades, where the  
souls assemble,  
He will guide the Death-steed calm  
between their ranks,  
While, like beaten dogs, they a little  
moan and tremble  
To see the darkness curdle from the  
horse's glittering flanks.  
Through the flats of Hades, where the  
dreary shade is,  
Up the steep of heaven, will the Tamer  
guide the steed, —  
Up the spheric circles, circle above  
circle,  
We who count the ages shall count  
the tolling tread;

Every hoof-fall striking a blinder,  
blanker sparkle  
From the stony orbs, which shall show  
as they were dead.

*Second semichorus.*

All the way the Death-steed with toll-  
ing hoofs shall travel;  
Ashen gray the planets shall be mo-  
tionless as stones;  
Loosely shall the systems eject their  
parts coeval;  
Stagnant in the spaces shall float the  
pallid moons:  
Suns that touch their apogees, reeling  
from their level,  
Shall run back on their axles in wild,  
low, broken tunes.

*Chorus.*

Up against the arches of the crystal  
ceiling,  
From the horse's nostrils, shall steam  
the blurring breath;  
Up between the angels pale with si-  
lent feeling,  
Will the Tamer calmly lead the horse  
of Death.

*Semi-chorus.*

Cleaving all that silence, cleaving all  
that glory,  
Will the Tamer lead him straightway  
to the Throne;  
"Look out, O Jehovah, to this I bring  
before thee,  
With a hand nail-piercèd, — I who am  
thy Son."  
Then the Eye Divinest, from the  
Deepest, flaming,  
On the mystic courser shall look out  
in fire:  
Blind the beast shall stagger where it  
overcame him,  
Meek as lamb at pasture, bloodless in  
desire.  
Down the beast shall shiver, slain  
amid the taming,  
And by Life essential the phantasm  
Death expire.

*Chorus.*

Listen, man, through life and  
death,  
Through the dust and through the  
breath;  
Listen down the heart of things!  
Ye shall hear our mystic wings  
Murmurous with loving.  
*A Voice from below.* Gabriel, thou  
Gabriel!  
*A Voice from above.* What wouldst  
thou with me?

*First Voice.* I heard thy voice sound  
in the angels' song,  
And I would give thee question.

*Second Voice.* Question me!

*First Voice.* Why have I called  
thrice to my morning star,  
And had no answer? All the stars  
are out,

And answer in their places. Only in vain  
I cast my voice against the outer rays  
Of my star shut in light behind the sun.  
No more reply than from a breaking  
string,

Breaking when touched. Or is she  
*not* my star?

Where *is* my star, my star? Have  
ye cast down

Her glory like my glory? Has she  
waxed

Mortal, like Adam? Has she learnt  
to hate

Like any angel?

*Second Voice.* She is sad for thee.  
All things grow sadder to thee, one  
by one.

*Angel Chorus.*

Live, work on, O Earthy!

By the Actual's tension

Speed the arrow worthy

Of a pure ascension;

From the low earth round you

Reach the heights above you;

From the stripes that wound you

Seek the loves that love you.

God's divinest burneth plain

Through the crystal diaphane

Of our loves that love you.

*First Voice.* Gabriel, O Gabriel!

*Second Voice.* What wouldst thou  
with me?

*First Voice.* Is it true, O thou Ga-  
briel, that the crown  
Of sorrow which I claimed, another  
claims?

That HE claims THAT too?

*Second Voice.* Lost one, it is true.

*First Voice.* That HE will be an ex-  
ile from his heaven

To lead those exiles homeward?

*Second Voice.* It is true.

*First Voice.* That HE will be an ex-  
ile by his will,

As I by mine election?

*Second Voice.* It is true.

*First Voice.* That I shall stand sole  
exile finally,—  
Made desolate for fruition?

*Second Voice.* It is true.

*First Voice.* Gabriel!

*Second Voice.* I hearken.

*First Voice.* Is it true besides,  
Arigh true, that mine orient star  
will give

Her name of "Bright and Morning  
Star" to HIM,

And take the fairness of his virtue back  
To cover loss and sadness?

*Second Voice.* It is true.

*First Voice.* UNtrue, UNtrue! O  
Morning Star, O MINE,

Who sittest secret in a veil of light  
Far up the starry spaces, say — *Untrue!*

Speak but so loud as doth a wasted  
moon

To Tyrrene waters. I am Lucifer.

[*A pause. Silence in the stars.*]

All things grow sadder to me, one by  
one.

*Angel Chorus*

Exiled human creatures,

Let your hope grow larger,

Larger grows the vision

Of the new delight.

From this chain of Nature's

God is the Discharger,

And the Actual's prison

Opens to your sight.

*Semichorus.*

Calm the stars and golden

In a light exceeding;

What their rays have measured

Let your feet fulfil!

These are stars beholden

By your eyes in Eden;

Yet across the desert,

See them shining still!

*Chorus.*

Future joy and far light,

Working such relations,

Hear us singing gently,

*Exiled is not lost!*

God, above the starlight,

God, above the patience,

Shall at last present ye

Guerdons worth the cost.

Patiently enduring,

Painfully surrounded,

Listen how we love you,

Hope the uttermost!

Waiting for that curing

Which exalts the wounded,

Hear us sing above you —

EXILED, BUT NOT LOST!

[*The stars shine on brightly while ADAM  
and EVE pursue their way into the  
far wilderness. There is a sound  
through the silence, as of the falling  
tears of an angel.*]

## THE SERAPHIM.

"I look for Angels' songs, and hear Him cry."

GILES FLETCHER.

### PART THE FIRST.

*[It is the time of the crucifixion; and the angels of heaven have departed towards the earth, except the two seraphim, ADOR the Strong, and ZERAH the Bright One. The place is the outer side of the shut heavenly gate.]*

*Ador.* O SERAPH, pause no more!  
Beside this gate of heaven we stand alone.

*Zerah.* Of heaven!

*Ador.* Our brother-hosts are gone—

*Zerah.* Are gone before.

*Ador.* And the golden harps the angels bore,

To help the songs of their desire,  
Still burning from their hands of fire,

Lie, without touch or tone,  
Upon the glass-sea shore.

*Zerah.* Silent upon the glass-sea shore!

*Ador.* There the Shadow from the throne,

Formless with infinity,  
Hovers o'er the crystal sea

Awfuller than light derived,  
And red with those primeval heats  
Whereby all life has lived.

*Zerah.* Our visible God, our heavenly seats!

*Ador.* Beneath us sinks the pomp angelical,

Cherub and seraph, powers and virtues, all,

The roar of whose descent has died

To a still sound, as a thunder in a rain.  
Immeasurable space spreads,  
magnified

With that thick life, along the plane

The worlds slid out on. What a fall

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And eddy of wings innumerable,  
crossed

By trailing curls that have not lost

The glitter of the God-smile shed

On every prostrate angel's head!  
What gleaming-up of hands  
that fling

Their homage in retorted rays,  
From high instinct of worshipping,

And habitude of praise!

*Zerah.* Rapidly they drop below us.

Pointed palm, and wing, and hair

Indistinguishable, show us  
Only pulses in the air

Throbbing with a fiery beat,  
As if a new creation heard

Some divine and plastic word,  
And, trembling at its new-found being,

Awakened at our feet.

*Ador.* Zerah, do not wait for seeing!

His voice, his, that thrills us so  
As we our harpstrings, uttered Go,  
*Behold the Holy in his woe!*

And all are gone, save thee and—

*Zerah.* Thee!

*Ador.* I stood the nearest to the throne,

In hierarchical degree,

What time the Voice said *Go!*

And whether I was moved alone

By the storm-pathos of the tone  
Which swept through heaven the alien name of *woe*,

Or whether the subtle glory broke  
Through my strong and shielding wings,

Bearing to my finite essence  
Incapacions of their presence,

Infinite imaginings,  
None knoweth save the Throned who spoke;



But I, who at creation stood upright,  
And heard the God-breath move  
Shaping the words that lightened,  
"Be there light,"

Nor trembled but with love,  
Now fell down shudderingly,  
My face upon the pavement whence I  
had towered,  
As if in mine immortal overpowered  
By God's eternity.

*Zerah.* Let me wait! let me wait!

*Ador.* Nay, gaze not backward  
through the gate!

God fills our heaven with God's own  
solitude

Till all the pavements glow.

His Godhead being no more subdued  
By itself, to glories low

Which seraphs can sustain,

What if thou, in gazing so,

Shouldst behold but only one

Attribute, the veil undone, —

Even that to which we dare to press

Nearest for its gentleness, —

Ay, his love!

How the deep ecstatic pain

Thy being's strength would capture!

Without language for the rapture,

Without music strong to come

And set the adoration free,

For ever, ever, wouldst thou be

Amid the general chorus dumb,

God-stricken to seraphic agony.

Or, brother, what if on thine eyes

In vision bare should rise

The life-fount whence his hand did  
gather

With solitary force

Our immortalities!

Straightway how thine own would  
wither,

Falter like a human breath,

And shrink into a point like death,

By gazing on its source! —

My words have imaged dread.

Meekly hast thou bent thine head,

And dropt thy wings in languish-  
ment

Overclouding foot and face,

As if God's throne were eminent

Before thee in the place.

Yet not — not so,

O loving spirit and meek, dost thou  
fulfil

The supreme Will.

Not for obeisance, but obedience,

Give motion to thy wings! Depart  
from hence!

The Voice said, "Go!"

*Zerah.* Beloved, I depart.

His will is as a spirit within my spirit,  
A portion of the being I inherit.

His will is mine obedience. I resem-  
ble

A flame all undefiled, though it trem-  
ble:

I go and tremble. Love me, O beloved!

O thou, who stronger art,

And standest ever near the Infinite,

Pale with the light of Light,

Love me, beloved! — me, more newly  
made,

More feeble, more afraid,

And let me hear with mine thy pin-  
ions moved,

As close and gentle as the loving are,

That, love being near, heaven may  
not seem so far.

*Ador.* I am near thee, and I love thee.

Were I loveless, from thee gone,

Love is round, beneath, above  
thee,

God, the omnipresent one.

Spread the wing, and lift the brow!

Well-beloved, what fearest thou?

*Zerah.* I fear, I fear —

*Ador.* What fear?

*Zerah.* The fear of earth.

*Ador.* Of earth, the God-created,  
and God-praised

In the hour of birth?

Where every night the moon in light

Doth lead the waters silver-faced?

Where every day the sun doth lay

A rapture to the heart of all

The leafy and reeded pastoral,

As if the joyous shout which burst

From angel lips to see him first

Had left a silent echo in his ray?

*Zerah.* Of earth, the God-created  
and God-eurst,

Where man is, and the thorn;

Where sun and moon have borne

No light to souls forlorn;

Where Eden's tree of life no more  
uprears

Its spiral leaves and fruitage, but  
instead

The yew-tree bows its melancholy  
head,

And all the undergrasses kills and  
sears.

*Ador.* Of earth the weak,

Made and unmade?

Where men that faint do strive for  
crowns that fade?

Where, having won the profit which  
they seek,

They lie beside the sceptre and the gold  
 With fleshless hands that cannot wield or hold,  
 And the stars shine in their unwinking eyes?

*Zerah.* Of earth the bold,  
 Where the blind matter wrings  
 An awful potency out of impotence,  
 Bowing the spiritual things  
 To the things of sense;  
 Where the human will replies  
 With ay and no,  
 Because the human pulse is quick or slow;  
 Where Love succumbs to Change,  
 With only his own memories, for revenge.

And the fearful mystery —  
*Ador.* Called Death?  
*Zerah.* Nay, death is fearful; but  
 who saith

“To die,” is comprehensible.  
 What’s fearfuller, thou knowest well,  
 Though the utterance be not for thee,  
 Lest it blanch thy lips from glory —  
 Ay! the cursed thing that moved  
 A shadow of ill, long time ago,  
 Across our heaven’s own shining floor,  
 And when it vanished some who were

On thrones of holy empire there,  
 Did reign — were seen — were — never more.

Come nearer, O beloved!

*Ador.* I am near thee. Didst thou  
 bear thee  
 Ever to this earth?

*Zerah.* Before.  
 When thrilling from his hand along  
 Its lustrous path with spheric song  
 The earth was deathless, sorrowless.  
 Unfearing, then, pure feet might  
 press

The grasses brightening with their feet,  
 For God’s own voice did mix its sound

In a solemn confluence oft  
 With the rivers’ flowing round,  
 And the life-tree’s waving soft.  
 Beautiful new earth and strange!

*Ador.* Hast thou seen it since — the change?

*Zerah.* Nay; or wherefore should I  
 fear  
 To look upon it now?  
 I have beheld the ruined things

Only in depicting  
 Of angels from an earthly mission.  
 Strong one, even upon thy brow,  
 When, with task completed, given  
 Back to us in that transition,  
 I have beheld thee silent stand,  
 Abstracted in the seraph band,  
 Without a smile in heaven.

*Ador.* Then thou wast not one of those

Whom the loving Father chose  
 In visionary pomp to sweep  
 O’er Judæa’s grassy places,  
 O’er the shepherds and the sheep,  
 Though thou art so tender, dimming

All the stars except one star  
 With their brighter, kinder faces?  
 And using heaven’s own tune in hymning,

While deep response from earth’s own mountains ran,  
 “Peace upon earth, good-will to man.”

*Zerah.* “Glory to God.” I said  
 amen afar.

And those who from that earthly mission are,

Within mine ears have told  
 That the seven everlasting Spirits did hold

With such a sweet and prodigal constraint

The meaning yet the mystery of the song

What time they sang it, on their natures strong,

That, gazing down on earth’s dark steadfastness,

And speaking the new peace in promises,

The love and pity made their voices faint

Into the low and tender music, keeping

The place in heaven of what on earth is weeping.

*Ador.* Peace upon earth. Come down to it.

*Zerah.* Ah me!

I hear thereof uncomprehendingly.  
 Peace where the tempest, where the

sighing is,  
 And worship of the idol, ’stead of His?

*Ador.* Yea, peace, where He is.

*Zerah.* He!

Say it again.

*Ador.* Where He is.

*Zerah.* Can it be  
That earth retains a tree  
Whose leaves like Eden foliage can  
be swayed  
By the breathing of His voice, nor  
shrink and fade?  
*Ador.* There is a tree! — it hath no  
leaf nor root;  
Upon it hangs a curse for all its fruit:  
Its shadow on His head is laid.  
For He, the crownèd Son,  
Has left his crown and throne,  
Walks earth in Adam's clay,  
Eve's snake to bruise and slay —  
*Zerah.* Walks earth in clay?  
*Ador.* And, walking in the clay  
which he created,  
He through it shall touch death.  
What do I utter? what conceive? did  
breath  
Of demon howl it in a blasphemy?  
Or was it mine own voice, informed,  
dilated  
By the seven confluent Spirits — Speak  
— answer me!  
*Who* said man's victim was his deity?  
*Zerah.* Beloved, beloved, the word  
came forth from thee.  
Thine eyes are rolling a tempestuous  
light  
Above, below, around,  
As putting thunder questions without  
cloud,  
Reverberate without sound,  
To universal nature's depth and  
height.  
The tremor of an inexpressive thought  
Too self-amazed to shape itself aloud  
O'erruns the awful curving of thy lips;  
And while thine hands are stretched  
above,  
As newly they had caught  
Some lightning from the throne, or  
showed the Lord  
Some retributive sword,  
Thy brows do alternate with wild  
eclipse  
And radiance, with contrasted wrath  
and love,  
As God had called thee to a  
seraph's part,  
With a man's quailing heart.  
*Ador.* O heart, O heart of man!  
O ta'en from human clay  
To be no seraph's, but Jehovah's  
own!  
Made holy in the taking,  
And yet unseparate  
From death's perpetual ban,  
And human feelings sad and passion-  
ate;  
Still subject to the treacherous for-  
saking  
Of other hearts, and its own steadfast  
pain.  
O heart of man — of God! which God  
has ta'en  
From out the dust, with its humanity  
Mournful and weak, yet innocent,  
around it,  
And bade its many pulses beating  
lie  
Beside that incommunicable stir  
Of Deity wherewith he interwound it.  
O man! and is thy nature so defiled  
That all that holy heart's devout law-  
keeping,  
And low pathetic beat in deserts wild,  
And gushings pitiful of tender weep-  
ing  
For traitors who consigned it to such  
woe, —  
That all could cleanse thee not, with-  
out the flow  
Of blood, the life-blood — *His* — and  
streaming *so*?  
O earth the thundercleft, windshaken,  
where  
The louder voice of "blood and  
blood" doth rise,  
Hast thou an altar for this sacrifice?  
O heaven! O vacant throne!  
O crownèd hierarchies that wear your  
crown  
When his is put away!  
Are ye unshamèd that ye cannot dim  
Your alien brightness to be liker him,  
Assume a human passion, and down-  
lay  
Your sweet secureness for congenial  
fears,  
And teach your cloudless ever-burn-  
ing eyes  
The mystery of his tears?  
*Zerah.* I am strong, I am strong,  
Were I never to see my heaven again,  
I would wheel to earth like the tem-  
pest rain  
Which sweeps there with an exultant  
sound  
To lose its life as it reaches the  
ground.  
I am strong, I am strong,  
Away from mine inward vision swim  
The shining seats of my heavenly  
birth,  
I see but his, I see but him —  
The Maker's steps on his cruel earth.

Will the bitter herbs of earth grow  
sweet  
To me, as trodden by his feet?  
Will the vexed accurst humanity,  
As worn by him, begin to be  
A blessed, yea, a sacred thing,  
For love and awe and ministering?  
I am strong, I am strong.  
By our angel ken shall we survey  
His loving smile through his woful  
clay?  
I am swift, I am strong,  
The love is bearing me along.  
*Ador.* One love is bearing us along.

## PART THE SECOND.

[*Mid-air, above Judea. ADOR and ZERAH are a little apart from the visible angelic hosts.*]

*Ador.* BELOVED, dost thou see?  
*Zerah.* Thee — thee.  
Thy burning eyes already are  
Grown wild and mournful as a  
star  
Whose occupation is for aye  
To look upon the place of clay  
Whereon thou lookest now.  
Thy crown is fainting on thy brow  
To the likeness of a cloud,  
The forehead's self a little bowed  
From its aspect high and holy,  
As it would in meekness meet  
Some seraphic melancholy:  
Thy very wings that lately flung  
An outline clear do flicker here  
And wear to each a shadow hung,  
Dropped across thy feet.  
In these strange contrasting  
glooms  
Stagnant with the scent of tombs,  
Seraph faces, O my brother,  
Show awfully to one another.  
*Ador.* Dost thou see?  
*Zerah,* Even so: I see  
Our empyreal company,  
Alone the memory of their bright-  
ness  
Left in them, as in thee.  
The circle upon circle, tier on tier,  
Piling earth's hemisphere  
With heavenly infiniteness,  
Above us and around,  
Straining the whole horizon like a  
bow:

Their songful lips divorcèd from all  
sound,  
A darkness gliding down their silvery  
glances,  
Bowing their steadfast solemn counte-  
nances  
As if they heard God speak, and could  
not glow.  
*Ador.* Look downward! dost thou  
see?  
*Zerah.* And wouldst thou press *that*  
vision on my words?  
Doth not earth speak enough  
Of change and of undoing,  
Without a seraph's witness? Oceans  
rough  
With tempest, pastoral swards  
Displaced by fiery deserts, mountains  
ruing  
The bolt fallen yesterday,  
That shake their piny heads, as who  
would say  
"We are too beautiful for our de-  
cay" —  
Shall seraphs speak of these things?  
Let alone  
Earth to her earthly moan!  
*Voice of all things.* Is there no moan  
but hers?  
*Ador.* Hearest thou the attestation  
Of the rousèd universe  
Like a desert lion shaking  
Dews of silence from its mane?  
With an irrepulsive passion  
Uprising at once,  
Rising up and forsaking  
Its solemn state in the circle of suns,  
To attest the pain  
Of him who stands (O patience  
sweet!)  
In his own handprints of creation,  
With human feet?  
*Voice of all things.* Is there no  
moan but ours?  
*Zerah.* Forms, Spaces, Motions  
wide,  
O meek, insensate things,  
O congregated matters! who inherit  
Instead of vital powers,  
Impulsions God-supplied;  
Instead of influent spirit,  
A clear informing beauty;  
Instead of creature-duty  
Submission calm as rest.  
Lights, without feet or wings,  
In golden courses sliding!  
Glooms, stagnantly subsiding,  
Whose lustrous heart away was prest  
Into the argent stars!

Ye crystal, firmamental bars  
That hold the skyey waters free  
From tide or tempest's ecstasy!  
Airs universal! thunders lorn  
That wait your lightnings in cloud-  
cave

Hewn out by the winds! O brave  
And subtle elements! the Holy  
Hath charged me by your voice  
with folly.<sup>1</sup>

Enough, the mystic arrow leaves its  
wound.

Return ye to your silences inborn,  
Or to your inarticulated sound.

*Ador.* Zerah!

*Zerah.* Wilt thou rebuke?

God hath rebuked me, brother. I am  
weak.

*Ador.* Zerah, my brother Zerah!  
could I speak

Of thee, 'twould be of love to thee.

*Zerah.* Thy look  
Is fixed on earth, as mine upon thy  
face.

Where shall I seek His?

I have thrown  
One look upon earth, but one,  
Over the blue mountain lines,  
Over the forests of palms and pines,  
Over the harvest-lands golden,  
Over the valleys that fold in  
The gardens and vines—  
He is not there.

All these are unworthy  
Those footsteps to bear,  
Before which, bowing down

I would fain quench the stars of my  
crown

In the dark of the earthy.

Where shall I seek him?

No reply?  
Hath language left thy lips, to place  
Its vocal in thine eye?

*Ador.* Ador! are we come  
To a double portent, that  
Dumb matter grows articulate,  
And songful seraphs dumb?

*Ador.* Ador!

*Ador.* I constrain  
The passion of my silence. None  
Of those places gazed upon  
Are gloomy enow to fit his pain.  
Unto Him whose forming word  
Gave to nature flower and sward,  
She hath given back again

For the myrtle, the thorn,  
For the sylvan calm, the human scorn.

<sup>1</sup> "His angels he charged with folly."—  
JOB iv. 18.

Still, still, reluctant seraph, gaze be-  
neath!

There is a city—

*Zerah.* Temple and tower,  
Palace and purple, would droop like a  
flower,

(Or a cloud at our breath)

If He neared in his state

The outermost gate.

*Ador.* Ah me, not so  
In the state of a king did the victim  
go!

And THOU who hangest mute of  
speech

'Twixt heaven and earth, with fore-  
head yet

Stained by the bloody sweat,  
God! man! thou hast forgone thy  
throne in each.

*Zerah.* Thine eyes behold him!

*Ador.* Yea, below.

Track the gazing of mine eyes,  
Naming God within thine heart  
That its weakness may depart,  
And the vision rise!

Seest thou yet, beloved?

*Zerah.* I see  
Beyond the city, crosses three,  
And mortals three that hang there-  
on

'Ghast and silent to the sun.  
Round them blacken and welter  
and press

Staring multitudes whose father  
Adam was, whose brows are dark  
With his Cain's corroded mark,  
Who curse with looks. Nay—let  
me rather

Turn unto the wilderness!

*Ador.* Turn not! God dwells with  
men.

*Zerah.* Above  
He dwells with angels, and they love.  
Can these love? With the living's  
pride

They stare at those who die, who  
hang

In their sight and die. They bear  
the streak

Of the crosses' shadow, black not  
wide,

To fall on their heads, as it swerves  
aside

When the victims' pang  
Makes the dry wood creak.

*Ador.* The cross—the cross!

*Zerah.* A woman kneels  
The mid cross under,  
With white lips asunder,

And motion on each.  
 They throb as she feels,  
 With a spasm, not a speech;  
 And her lids, close as sleep,  
 Are less calm, for the eyes  
 Have made room there to weep  
 Drop on drop—  
*Ador.* Weep? Weep blood,  
 All women, all men!  
 He sweated it, He,  
 For your pale womanhood  
 And base manhood. Agree  
 That these water-tears, then,  
 Are vain, mocking like laugh-  
 ter.  
 Weep blood! Shall the flood  
 Of salt curses, whose foam is the  
 darkness, on roll  
 Forward, on from the strand of the  
 storm-beaten years,  
 And back from the rocks of the hor-  
 rid hereafter,  
 And up in a coil from the present's  
 wrath-spring,  
 Yea, down from the windows of  
 heaven opening,  
 Deep calling to deep as they meet on  
 His son!—  
 And men weep only tears?  
*Zerah.* Little drops in the lapse!  
 And yet, Ador, perhaps  
 It is all that they can.  
 Tears! the lovingest man  
 Has no better bestowed  
 Upon man.  
*Ador.* Nor on God.  
*Zerah.* Do all-givers need gifts?  
 If the Giver said "Give," the first  
 motion would slay  
 Our Immortals, the echo would ruin  
 away  
 The same worlds which he made.  
 Why, what angel uplifts  
 Such a music, so clear,  
 It may seem in God's ear  
 Worth more than a woman's hoarse  
 weeping? And thus,  
 Pity tender as tears I above thee  
 would speak,  
 Thou woman that weepst! weep un-  
 scorned of us!  
 I, the tearless and pure, am but loving  
 and weak.  
*Ador.* Speak low, my brother, low,  
 —and not of love  
 Or human or angelic! Rather stand  
 Before the throne of that Supreme  
 above,  
 In whose infinitude the secrecies

Of thine own being lie hid, and lift  
 thine hand  
 Exultant, saying, "Lord God, I am  
 wise!"  
 Than utter *here*, "I love."  
*Zerah.* And yet thine eyes  
 Do utter it. They melt in tender  
 light,—  
 The tears of heaven.  
*Ador.* Of heaven. Ah, me!  
*Zerah.* Ador!  
*Ador.* Say on!  
*Zerah.* The crucified are three.  
 Beloved, they are unlike.  
*Ador.* Unlike.  
*Zerah.* For one  
 Is as a man who has sinned, and  
 still  
 Doth wear the wicked will,  
 The hard, malign life-energy,  
 Tossed outward, in the parting soul's  
 disdain,  
 On brow and lip that cannot change  
 again.  
*Ador.* And one—  
*Zerah.* Has also sinned.  
 And yet (O marvel!) doth the Spirit-  
 wind  
 Blow white those waters? Death  
 upon his face  
 Is rather shine than shade,—  
 A tender shine by looks beloved  
 made:  
 He seemeth dying in a quiet place,  
 And less by iron wounds in hands  
 and feet  
 Than heart-broke by new joy too sud-  
 den and sweet.  
*Ador.* And ONE!—  
*Zerah.* And ONE!—  
*Ador.* Why dost thou pause?  
*Zerah.* God! God!  
 Spirit of my spirit! who movest  
 Through seraph veins in burning  
 deity  
 To light the quenchless pulses!—  
*Ador.* But hast trod  
 The depths of love in thy peculiar  
 nature,  
 And not in any thou hast made and  
 lovest  
 In narrow seraph hearts!—  
*Zerah.* Above, Creator!  
 Within, Upholder!  
*Ador.* And below, below.  
 The creature's and the upholden's  
 sacrifice!  
*Zerah.* Why do I pause?  
*Ador.* There is a silentness

That answers thee enow,  
That, like a brazen sound  
Excluding others, doth ensheathe us  
round;  
Hear it. It is not from the visible  
skies,  
Though they are still,  
Unconscious that their own dropped  
dews express  
The light of heaven on every earthly  
hill.  
It is not from the hills, though calm  
and bare  
They, since their first creation,  
Through midnight cloud or morning's  
glittering air,  
Or the deep deluge blindness, toward  
the place  
Whence thrilled the mystic word's  
creative grace,  
And whence again shall come  
The word that uncreates,  
Have lift their brows in voiceless ex-  
pectation.  
It is not from the places that en-  
tomb  
Man's dead, though common Silence  
there dilates  
Her soul to grand proportions, wor-  
thily  
To fill life's vacant room.  
Not there — not there.  
Not yet within those chambers lieth  
He,  
A dead one in his living world; his  
south  
And west winds blowing over earth  
and sea,  
And not a breath on that creating  
mouth.  
But now a silence keeps  
(Not death's, nor sleep's)  
The lips whose whispered word  
Might roll the thunders round rever-  
berated.  
Silent art thou, O my Lord,  
Bowing down thy stricken head!  
Fearest thou a groan of thine  
Would make the pulse of thy crea-  
tion fail  
As thine own pulse? — would rend  
the veil  
Of visible things, and let the flood  
Of the unseen Light, the essential  
God,  
Rush in to overwhelm the undivine?  
Thy silence, to my thinking, is as  
dread.  
*Zerah.* O silence!

*Ador.* Doth it say to thee  
— the NAME,  
Slow-learning seraph?  
*Zerah.* I have learnt.  
*Ador.* The flame  
Perishes in thine eyes.  
*Zerah.* He opened his,  
And looked. I cannot bear —  
*Ador.* Their agony?  
*Zerah.* Their love. God's depth is  
in them. From his brows  
White, terrible in meekness, didst  
thou see  
The lifted eyes unclose?  
He is God, seraph! Look no more on  
me,  
O God — I am not God.  
*Ador.* The loving is  
Sublimed within them by the sorrow-  
ful.  
In heaven we could sustain them.  
*Zerah.* Heaven is dull,  
Mine *Ador*, to man's earth. The  
light that burns  
In fluent, refluxent motion  
Along the crystal ocean;  
The springing of the golden harps be-  
tween  
The bowery wings, in fountains of  
sweet sound;  
The winding, wandering music that  
returns  
Upon itself, exultingly self-bound  
In the great spheric round  
Of everlasting praises;  
The God-thoughts in our midst that  
intervene,  
Visibly flashing from the supreme  
throne  
Full in seraphic faces  
Till each astonishes the other, grown  
More beautiful with worship and de-  
light —  
My heaven! my home of heaven! my  
infinite  
Heaven choirs! what are ye to this  
dust and death,  
This cloud, this cold, these tears, this  
failing breath,  
Where God's immortal love now is-  
sueth  
In this MAN'S woe?  
*Ador.* His eyes are very deep, yet  
calm.  
*Zerah.* No more  
On me, Jehovah-man —  
*Ador.* Calm-deep. They show  
A passion which is tranquil. They  
are seeing

No earth, no heaven, no men that  
 slay and curse,  
 No seraphs that adore;  
 Their gaze is on the invisible, the  
 dread,  
 The things we cannot view or think  
 or speak,  
 Because we are too happy, or too  
 weak, —  
 The sea of ill for which the universe  
 With all its piled space, can find no  
 shore,  
 With all its life no living foot to  
 tread.  
 But he, accomplished in Jehovah-  
 being,  
 Sustains the gaze adown,  
 Conceives the vast despair,  
 And feels the billowy griefs come up  
 to drown,  
 Nor fears, nor faints, nor fails, till all  
 be finished.  
*Zerah.* Thus, do I find Thee thus?  
 My undiminished  
 And undiminishable God! — my God!  
 The echoes are still tremulous along  
 The heavenly mountains, of the latest  
 song  
 Thy manifested glory swept abroad  
 In rushing past our lips: they echo  
 aye  
 “Creator, thou art strong!  
 Creator, thou art blessed over all.”  
 By what new utterance shall I now  
 recall,  
 Unteaching the heaven-echoes? dare  
 I say,  
 “Creator, thou art feebler than thy  
 work!  
 Creator, thou art sadder than thy  
 creature!  
 A worm, and not a man,  
 Yea, no worm, but a curse”?  
 I dare not so mine heavenly phrase  
 reverse.  
 Albeit the piercing thorn and thistle-  
 fork  
 (Whose seed disordered ran  
 From Eve’s hand trembling when the  
 curse did reach her)  
 Be garnered darklier in thy soul, the  
 rod  
 That smites thee never blossoming,  
 and thou  
 Grief-bearer for thy world, with un-  
 kinged brow —  
 I leave to men their song of Ichabod:  
 I have an angel-tongue — I know but  
 praise.

*Ador.* Hereafter shall the blood-  
 bought captives raise  
 The passion-song of blood.  
*Zerah.* And *we*, extend  
 Our holy vacant hands towards the  
 throne,  
 Crying, “We have no music.”  
*Ador.* Rather, blend  
 Both musics into one.  
 The sanctities and sanctified above  
 Shall each to each, with lifted looks  
 serene,  
 Their shining faces lean,  
 And mix the adoring breath,  
 And breathe the full thanksgiving.  
*Zerah.* But the love —  
 The love, mine *Ador*!  
*Ador.* Do we love not?  
*Zerah.* Yea,  
 But not as man shall! not with life  
 for death,  
 New-throbbing through the startled  
 being; not  
 With strange astonished smiles, that  
 ever may  
 Gush passionate, like tears, and fill  
 their place;  
 Nor yet with speechless memories of  
 what  
 Earth’s winters were, enverduring the  
 green  
 Of every heavenly palm  
 Whose windless, shadeless calm  
 Moves only at the breath of the Un-  
 seen.  
 Oh, not with this blood on us, and  
 this face,  
 Still, haply, pale with sorrow that it  
 bore  
 In our behalf, and tender evermore,  
 With nature all our own, upon us  
 gazing,  
 Nor yet with these forgiving hands  
 upraising  
 Their unapproachful wounds, alone to  
 bless!  
 Alas, Creator! shall we love thee less  
 Than mortals shall?  
*Ador.* Amen! so let it be.  
 We love in our proportion to the  
 bound  
 Thine infinite our finite set around,  
 And that is finitely, thou infinite,  
 And worthy infinite love! And our  
 delight  
 Is watching the dear love poured out  
 to thee  
 From ever fuller chalice. Blessed  
 they,



Who love thee more than we do:  
blessed we,  
Viewing that love which shall exceed  
even this,  
And winning in the sight a double  
bliss

For all so lost in love's supremacy.  
The bliss is better. Only on the sad  
Cold earth there are who say  
It seemeth better to be great than  
glad.

The bliss is better. Love him more,  
O man,

Than sinless seraphs can!

*Zerah.* Yea, love him more!

*Voices of the angelic multitude.* Yea,  
more!

*Ador.* The loving word  
Is caught by those from whom we  
stand apart;

For silence hath no deepness in her  
heart

Where love's low name low breathed  
would not be heard

By angels, clear as thunder.

*Angelic Voices.* Love him more.

*Ador.* Sweet voices, swooning o'er  
The music which ye make!

Albeit to love there were not ever  
given

A mournful sound when uttered out  
of heaven,

That angel-sadness ye would fitly  
take.

Of love be silent now! We gaze  
adown

Upon the incarnate Love who wears  
no crown.

*Zerah.* No crown! the woe instead  
Is heavy on his head,

Pressing inward on his brain

With a hot and clinging pain

Till all tears are prest away,

And clear and calm his vision may

Peruse the black abyss.

No rod, no sceptre, is

Holden in his fingers pale:

They close instead upon the nail,

Concealing the sharp dole,

Never stirring to put by

The fair hair peaked with blood,

Drooping forward from the rood

Helplessly, heavily,

On the cheek that waxeth colder,

Whiter ever, and the shoulder

Where the government was laid.

His glory made the heavens afraid:

Will he not unearth this cross from  
its hole?

His pity makes his piteous state;

Will he be uncompassionate

Alone to his proper soul?

Yea, will he not lift up

His lips from the bitter cup,

His brows from the dreary weight,

His hand from the clinching cross,

Crying, "My Father, give to me

Again the joy I had with thee

Or ere this earth was made for

loss"?

No stir — no sound.

The love and woe being interwound,

He cleaveth to the woe,

And putteth forth heaven's strength

below —

To bear.

*Ador.* And that creates his anguish

now,

Which made his glory there.

*Zerah.* Shall it need be so?

Awake, thou Earth! behold, —

Thou, uttered forth of old

In all thy life-emotion,

In all thy vernal noises;

In the rollings of thine ocean,

Leaping founts, and rivers run-

ning,

In thy woods' prophetic heaving

Ere the rains a stroke have

given;

In thy winds' exultant voices

When they feel the hills anear;

In the firmamental sunning,

And the tempest which rejoices

Thy full heart with an awful cheer!

Thou, uttered forth of old,

And with all thy music rolled

In a breath abroad

By the breathing God!

Awake! He is here! behold!

Even thou —

Beseems it good

To thy vacant vision dim,

That the deadly ruin should

For thy sake encompass him?

That the Master-word should lie

A mere silence, while his own

Processive harmony,

The faintest echo of his lightest tone,

Is sweeping in a choral triumph by?

Awake! emit a cry!

And say, albeit used

From Adam's ancient years

To falls of acrid tears,

To frequent sighs unloosed,

Caught back to press again

On bosoms zoned with pain, —

To corse still and sullen

The shine and music dulling  
 With closèd eyes and ears  
 That nothing sweet can enter,  
 Commoving thee no less  
 With that forced quietness  
 Than the earthquake in thy cen-  
 tre —  
 Thou hast not learnt to bear  
 This new divine despair!  
 These tears that sink into thee,  
 These dying eyes that view thee,  
 This dropping blood from lifted  
 rood,  
 They darken and undo thee.  
 Thou canst not presently sustain  
 this corse —  
 Cry, cry, thou hast not force!  
 Cry, thou wouldst fainer keep  
 Thy hopeless charnels deep,  
 Thyself a general tomb  
 Where the first and the second  
 Death  
 Sit gazing face to face,  
 And mar each other's breath.  
 While silent bones through all the  
 place  
 'Neath sun and moon do faintly  
 glisten,  
 And seem to lie and listen  
 For the tramp of the coming Doom.  
 Is it not meet  
 That they who erst the Eden fruit  
 did eat  
 Should champ the ashes?  
 That they who wrap them in the  
 thunder-cloud  
 Should wear it as a shroud,  
 Perishing by its flashes?  
 That they who vexed the lion should  
 be rent?  
 Cry, cry, "I will sustain my pun-  
 ishment,  
 The sin being mine, but take away  
 from me  
 This visioned dread — this Man —  
 this Deity!"  
*The Earth.* I have groaned; I have  
 travailed: I am weary.  
 I am blind with my own grief, and  
 cannot see,  
 As clear-eyed angels can, his agony;  
 And what I see I also can sustain,  
 Because his power protects me from  
 his pain.  
 I have groaned; I have travailed: I  
 am dreary,  
 Harkening the thick sobs of my  
 children's heart:  
 How can I say "Depart"

To that Atoner making calm and free?  
 Am I a God as he,  
 To lay down peace and power as will-  
 ingly?  
*Ador.* He looked for some to pity:  
 there is none.  
 All pity is within him, and not for  
 him.  
 His earth is iron under him, and o'er  
 him  
 His skies are brass.  
 His seraphs cry, "Alas!"  
 With hallelujah voice that cannot  
 weep.  
 And man, for whom the dreadful  
 work is done . . .  
*Scornful Voices from the Earth.* If  
 verily this be the Eternal's  
 son —  
*Ador.* Thou hearest. Man is grate-  
 ful.  
*Zerah.* Can I hear,  
 Nor darken into man, and cease for-  
 ever  
 My seraph smile to wear?  
 Was it for such  
 It pleased him to overleap  
 His glory with his love, and sever  
 From the God-light and the  
 throne,  
 And all angels bowing down,  
 From whom his every look did  
 touch  
 New notes of joy on the unworn  
 string  
 Of an eternal worshipping?  
 For such he left his heaven?  
 There, though never bought by  
 blood  
 And tears, we gave him gratitude:  
 We loved him there, though un-  
 forgiven.  
*Ador.* The light is riven  
 Above, around,  
 And down in lurid fragments flung,  
 That catch the mountain-peak and  
 stream  
 With momentary gleam,  
 Then perish in the water and the  
 ground.  
 River and waterfall,  
 Forest and wilderness,  
 Mountain and city, are together  
 wrung  
 Into one shape, and that is shapeless-  
 ness:  
 The darkness stands for all.  
*Zerah.* The pathos hath the day un-  
 done:

The death-look of his eyes  
Hath overcome the sun,  
And made it sicken in its narrow  
skies.

*Ador.* Is it to death? He dieth.

*Zerah.* Through the dark  
He still, he only, is discernible.  
The naked hands and feet transfixed  
stark,

The countenance of patient anguish  
white,

Do make themselves a light  
More dreadful than the glooms which  
round them dwell,  
And therein do they shine.

*Ador.* God! Father-God!  
Perpetual Radianee on the radiant  
throne!

Uplift the lids of inward deity,  
Flashing abroad

Thy burning Infinite!

Light up this dark where there is  
nought to see

Except the unimagined agony  
Upon the sinless forehead of the Son!

*Zerah.* God, tarry not! Behold,  
enow

Hath he wandered as a stranger,  
Sorrowed as a victim. Thou

Appear for him, O Father!

Appear for him, Avenger!

Appear for him, Just One and Holy  
One,

For he is holy and just!

At once the darkness and dishonor  
rather

To the ragged jaws of hungry chaos  
rake,

And hurl aback to ancient dust  
These mortals that make blasphemies

With their made breath, this earth  
and skies

That only grow a little dim,

Seeing their curse on him.

But him, of all forsaken,

Of creature and of brother,

Never wilt thou forsake!

Thy living and thy loving cannot  
slacken

Their firm essential hold upon each  
other,

And well thou dost remember how  
his part

Was still to lie upon thy breast, and  
be

Partaker of the light that dwelt in  
thee

Ere sun or seraph shone;

And how, while silence trembled  
round the throne,  
Thou countedst by the beatings of  
his heart

The moments of thine own eternity.

Awaken,

O right hand with the lightnings!  
Again gather

His glory to thy glory! What es-  
tranger,

What ill supreme in evil, can be thrust  
Between the faithful Father and the  
Son?

Appear for him, O Father!

Appear for him, Avenger!

Appear for him, Just One and Holy  
One,

For he is holy and just!

*Ador.* Thy face upturned toward  
the throne is dark;

Thou hast no answer, *Zerah.*

*Zerah.* No reply,

O unforsaking Father?

*Ador.* Hark!

Instead of downward voice, a cry

Is uttered from beneath.

*Zerah.* And by a sharper sound  
than death

Mine immortality is riven.

The heavy darkness which doth tent  
the sky

Floats backward as by a sudden wind;  
But I see no light behind;

But I feel the farthest stars are all

Stricken and shaken,

And I know a shadow sad and broad  
Doth fall — doth fall

On our vacant thrones in heaven.

*Voice from the Cross.* MY GOD, MY  
GOD,

WHY HAST THOU ME FORSAKEN?

*The Earth.* Ah me, ah me, ah me!  
the dreadful why!

My sin is on thee, sinless one! Thou  
art

God-orphaned for my burden on thy  
head.

Dark sin, white innocence, endurance  
dread!

Be still within your shrouds, my  
buried dead,

Nor work with this quick horror  
round mine heart.

*Zerah.* He hath forsaken *Him.* I  
perish.

*Ador.* Hold

Upon his name! we perish not. Of  
old

His will —

*Zerah.* I seek his will. Seek, seraphim!  
My God, my God! where is it?  
Doth that curse  
Reverberate spare us, seraph or universe?

*He hath forsaken Him.*

*Ador.* He cannot fail.

*Angel Voices.* We faint, we droop;  
Our love doth tremble like fear.

*Voices of Fallen Angels from the Earth.* Do we prevail?

Or are we lost? Hath not the ill we did

Been heretofore our good?

Is it not ill that One, all sinless,  
should

Hang heavy with all curses on a  
cross?

Nathless, that cry! With huddled  
faces hid

Within the empty graves which men  
did scoop

To hold more damnèd dead, we shudder  
through

What shall exalt us, or undo, —

Our triumph, or our loss.

*Voice from the Cross.* IT IS FINISHED.

*Zerah.* Hark, again!  
Like a victor speaks the slain.

*Angel Voices.* Finished be the trembling  
vain!

*Ador.* Upward, like a well-loved  
son,

Looketh He, the orphaned One.

*Angel Voices.* Finished is the mystic  
pain.

*Voices of Fallen Angels.* His deathly  
forehead at the word

Gleameth like a seraph sword.

*Angel Voices.* Finished is the demon  
reign.

*Ador.* His breath, as living God,  
createth;

His breath, as dying man, completeth.

*Angel Voices.* Finished work his  
hands sustain.

*The Earth.* In mine ancient sepulchres,

Where my kings and prophets freeze,  
Adam dead four thousand years,

Unwakened by the universe's

Everlasting moan,

Aye his ghastly silence mocking —

Unwakened by his children's knocking

At his old sepulchral stone,

“Adam, Adam, all this curse is

Thine and on us yet!” —

Unwakened by the ceaseless tears  
Wherewith they made his cerement  
wet,

“Adam, must thy curse remain?” —  
Starts with sudden life and hears,  
Through the slow dripping of the caverned eaves, —

*Angel Voices.* Finished is his bane.

*Voice from the Cross.* FATHER! MY  
SPIRIT TO THINE HANDS IS GIVEN.

*Ador.* Hear the wailing winds that  
be

By wings of unclean spirits made!

They in that last look surveyed

The love they lost in losing heaven,

And passionately flee

With a desolate cry that cleaves

The natural storms, though *they* are  
lifting

God's strong cedar-roots like leaves,  
And the earthquake and the thunder,

Neither keeping either under,  
Roar and hurtle through the glooms,

And a few pale stars are drifting

Past the dark to disappear,

What time, from the splitting tombs

Gleamingly the dead arise,

Viewing with their death-calmed  
eyes

The elemental strategies,

To witness, victory is the Lord's.

Hear the wail o' the spirits! hear!

*Zerah.* I hear alone the memory of  
his words.

## EPILOGUE.

### I.

My song is done.

My voice that long hath faltered shall  
be still.

The mystic darkness drops from Calvary's hill

Into the common light of this day's  
sun.

### II.

I see no more thy cross, O holy Slain!

I hear no more the horror and the  
coil

Of the great world's turmoil  
Feeling thy countenance *too still*, —  
nor yell

Of demons sweeping past it to their  
prison.  
The skies that turned to darkness  
with thy pain  
    Make now a summer's day;  
And on my changed ear that sabbath  
bell  
Records how CHRIST IS RISEN.

III.

And I — ah, what am I  
To counterfeit, with faculty earth-  
darkened,  
    Seraphic brows of light,  
And seraph language never used nor  
harkened?  
Ah me! what word that seraphs say,  
could come  
From mouth so used to sighs, so soon  
to lie  
Sighless, because then breathless, in  
the tomb?

IV.

Bright ministers of God and grace,  
of grace  
Because of God! — whether ye bow  
adown  
In your own heaven, before the living  
face  
Of Him who died, and deathless wears  
the crown,  
Or whether at this hour ye haply are

Anear, around me, hiding in the night  
Of this permitted ignorance your light,  
    This feebleness to spare, —  
Forgive me, that mine earthly heart  
should dare  
Shape images of unincarnate spirits,  
And lay upon their burning lips a  
thought  
Cold with the weeping which mine  
earth inherits.  
And though ye find in such hoarse  
music, wrought  
To copy yours, a cadence all the while  
Of sin and sorrow, only pitying smile!  
    Ye know to pity, well.

V.

I, too, may haply smile another day  
At the fair recollection of this lay,  
When God may call me in your midst  
to dwell,  
To hear your most sweet music's mir-  
acle,  
And see your wondrous faces. May  
it be!  
For his remembered sake, the Slain  
on rood,  
Who rolled his earthly garment red  
in blood  
(Treading the wine-press) that the  
weak, like me,  
Before his heavenly throne should  
walk in white.

PROMETHEUS BOUND.

FROM THE GREEK OF ÆSCHYLUS.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

PROMETHEUS.      HEPHÆSTUS.  
OCEANUS.          Io, daughter of Ina-  
HERMES.            chus.  
    STRENGTH and FORCE.  
    CHORUS of Ocean Nymphs.

SCENE. — STRENGTH and FORCE, HEPHÆSTUS and PROMETHEUS, at the Rocks.

*Strength.* We reach the utmost limit  
of the earth, —  
The Scythian track, the desert with-  
out man.

And now, Hephæstus, thou must  
needs fulfil  
The mandate of our Father, and with  
links  
Indissoluble of adamantine chains  
Fasten against this beetling precipice  
This guilty god. Because he filched  
away  
Thine own bright flower, the glory of  
plastic fire,  
And gifted mortals with it, — such a  
sin  
It doth behoove he expiate to the gods,

Learning to accept the empery of Zeus,  
And leave off his old trick of loving  
man.

*Hephaestus.* O Strength and Force,  
for you our Zeus's will  
Presents a deed for doing, no more! —

But I,  
I lack your daring, up this storm-rent  
chasm

To fix with violent hands a kindred  
god,  
Howbeit necessity compels me so  
That I must dare it, and our Zeus  
commands

With a most inevitable word. Ho,  
thou!

High-thoughted son of Themis, who is  
sage!

Thee loath, I loath must rivet fast in  
chains

Against this rocky height unclomb by  
man,

Where never human voice nor face  
shall find

Out thee who lov'st them; and thy  
beauty's flower,

Scorched in the sun's clear heat, shall  
fade away.

Night shall come up with garniture of  
stars

To comfort thee with shadow, and the  
sun

Disperse with retrickt beams the  
morning-frosts;

But through all changes, sense of pres-  
ent woe

Shall vex thee sore, because with  
none of them

There comes a hand to free. Such  
fruit is plucked

From love of man! And in that thou,  
a god,

Didst brave the wrath of gods, and  
give away

Undue respect to mortals, for that  
crime

Thou art adjudged to guard this joy-  
less rock,

Erect, unslumbering, bending not the  
knee,

And many a cry and unavailing moan  
To utter on the air. For Zeus is stern,  
And new-made kings are cruel.

*Strength.* Be it so.

Why loiter in vain pity? Why not  
hate

A god the gods hate? — one, too, who  
betrayed

Thy glory unto men?

*Hephaestus.* An awful thing  
Is kinship joined to friendship.

*Strength.* Grant it be:  
Is disobedience to the Father's word  
A possible thing? Dost quail not  
more for that?

*Hephaestus.* Thou, at least, art a  
stern one, ever bold.

*Strength.* Why, if I wept, it were no  
remedy;

And do not *thou* spend labor on the air  
To bootless uses.

*Hephaestus.* Cursed handicraft!  
I curse and hate thee, O my craft!

*Strength.* Why hate  
Thy craft most plainly innocent of all  
These pending ills?

*Hephaestus.* I would some other hand  
Were here to work it!

*Strength.* All work hath its pain,  
Except to rule the gods. There is  
none free

Except King Zeus.

*Hephaestus.* I know it very well;  
I argue not against it.

*Strength.* Why not, then,  
Make haste and lock the fetters over  
HIM,

Lest Zeus behold thee lagging?

*Hephaestus.* Here be chains.  
Zeus may behold these.

*Strength.* Seize him; strike amain;  
Strike with the hammer on each side  
his hands;

Rivet him to the rock.

*Hephaestus.* The work is done,  
And thoroughly done.

*Strength.* Still faster grapple him;  
Wedge him in deeper; leave no inch  
to stir.

He's terrible for finding a way out  
From the irremediable.

*Hephaestus.* Here's an arm, at least,  
Grappled past freeing.

*Strength.* Now, then, buckle me  
The other securely. Let this wise one  
learn

He's duller than our Zeus.

*Hephaestus.* Oh, none but he  
Accuse me justly.

*Strength.* Now, straight through the  
chest,

Take him and bite him with the  
clenching tooth

Of the adamantine wedge, and rivet  
him.

*Hephaestus.* Alas, Prometheus, what  
thou sufferest here

I sorrow over.



“Behold me, a god, what I endure from gods!”— Page 227.





*Strength.* Dost thou flinch again,  
And breathe groans for the enemies  
of Zeus?

Beware lest thine own pity find thee  
out.

*Hephaestus.* Thou dost behold a spec-  
tacle that turns  
The sight o' the eyes to pity.

*Strength.* I behold  
A sinner suffer his sin's penalty.  
But lash the thongs about his sides.

*Hephaestus.* So much  
I must do. Urge no farther than I  
must.

*Strength.* Ay, but I will urge! and,  
with shout on shout,  
Will hound thee at this quarry. Get  
thee down,

And ring amain the iron round his  
legs.

*Hephaestus.* That work was not long  
doing.

*Strength.* Heavily now  
Let fall the strokes upon the perfo-  
rant gyves;  
For he who rates the work has a  
heavy hand.

*Hephaestus.* Thy speech is savage as  
thy shape.

*Strength.* Be thou  
Gentle and tender, but revile not me  
For the firm will and the untruc-  
kling hate.

*Hephaestus.* Let us go. He is net-  
ted round with chains.

*Strength.* Here, now, taunt on! and,  
having spoiled the gods  
Of honors, crown withal thy mortal  
men  
Who live a whole day out. Why,  
how could *they*  
Draw off from thee one single of thy  
griefs?

Methinks the Dæmons gave thee a  
wrong name,

*Prometheus*, which means Providence,  
because

Thou dost thyself need providence to  
see

Thy roll and ruin from the top of  
doom.

*Prometheus (alone).* O holy Æther,  
and swift-winged Winds,  
And River-wells, and Laughter innu-  
merous

Of yon sea-waves! Earth, mother of  
us all,

And all-viewing cyclic Sun, I cry on  
you, —

Behold me a god, what I endure from  
gods!

Behold, with throe on throe,

How, wasted by this woe,

I wrestle down the myriad years of  
time!

Behold how, fast around me,

The new King of the happy ones  
sublime

Has flung the chain he forged, has  
shamed and bound me!

Woe, woe! to-day's woe and the  
coming morrow's

I cover with one groan. And where  
is found me

A limit to these sorrows?

And yet what word do I say? I  
have foreknown

Clearly all things that should be;  
nothing done

Comes sudden to my soul; and I  
must bear

What is ordained with patience,  
being aware

Necessity doth front the universe  
With an invincible gesture. Yet

this curse

Which strikes me now I find it hard  
to brave

In silence or in speech. Because I  
gave

Honor to mortals, I have yoked my  
soul

To this compelling fate. Because I  
stole

The secret fount of fire, whose bub-  
bles went

Over the ferule's brim, and man-  
ward sent

Art's mighty means and perfect ru-  
diment,

That sin I expiate in this agony.

Hung here in fetters, 'neath the  
blanching sky.

Ah, ah me! what a sound!

What a fragrance sweeps up from a  
pinion unseen

Of a god, or a mortal, or nature be-  
tween,

Sweeping up to this rock where the  
Earth has her bound,

To have sight of my pangs, or some  
guerdon obtain.

Lo, a god in the anguish, a god in the  
chain!

The god Zeus hateth sore,

And his gods hate again,

As many as tread on his glorified  
floor, —

Because I loved mortals too much  
 evermore.  
 Alas me! what a murmur and motion  
 I hear,  
 As of birds flying near!  
 And the air undersings  
 The light stroke of their wings,  
 And all life that approaches I wait for  
 in fear.

*Chorus of Sea-nymphs, 1st strophe.*

Fear nothing! our troop  
 Floats lovingly up  
 With a quick-oaring stroke  
 Of wings steered to the rock,  
 Having softened the soul of our  
 father below.  
 For the gales of swift-bearing have  
 sent me a sound,  
 And the clank of the iron, the mal-  
 letted blow,  
 Smote down the profound  
 Of my caverns of old,  
 And struck the red light in a blush  
 from my brow,  
 Till I sprang up unsandalled, in haste  
 to behold,  
 And rushed forth on my chariot of  
 wings manifold.

*Prometheus.* Alas me! alas me!  
 Ye offspring of Tethys, who bore at  
 her breast  
 Many children, and eke of Oceanus, he,  
 Coiling still around earth with per-  
 petual unrest!  
 Behold me and see  
 How transfixed with the fang  
 Of a fetter I hang  
 On the high-jutting rocks of this fis-  
 sure, and keep  
 An uncoveted watch o'er the world  
 and the deep.

*Chorus, 1st antistrophe.*

I behold thee, Prometheus; yet now,  
 yet now,  
 A terrible cloud whose rain is tears  
 Sweeps over mine eyes that witness  
 how  
 Thy body appears  
 Hung awaste on the rocks by infran-  
 gible chains:  
 For new is the hand, new the rudder,  
 that steers  
 The ship of Olympus through surge  
 and wind,  
 And of old things passed, no track is  
 behind.

*Prometheus.* Under earth, under  
 Hades,  
 Where the home of the shade is,  
 All into the deep, deep Tartarus,  
 I would he had hurled me adown.  
 I would he had plunged me, fastened  
 thus  
 In the knotted chain, with the savage  
 clang,  
 All into the dark, where there should  
 be none,  
 Neither god nor another, to laugh and  
 see.  
 But now the winds sing through  
 and shake  
 The hurtling chains wherein I  
 hang,  
 And I in my naked sorrows make  
 Much mirth for my enemy.

*Chorus, 2d strophe.*

Nay! who of the gods hath a heart so  
 stern  
 As to use thy woe for a mock and  
 mirth?  
 Who would not turn more mild to learn  
 Thy sorrows? who of the heaven  
 and earth  
 Save Zeus? But he  
 Right wrathfully  
 Bears on his sceptral soul unbent,  
 And rules thereby the heavenly  
 seed,  
 Nor will he pause till he content  
 His thirsty heart in a finished deed,  
 Or till Another shall appear,  
 To win by fraud, to seize by fear,  
 The hard-to-be-captured govern-  
 ment.

*Prometheus.* Yet even of me he shall  
 have need,  
 That monarch of the blessed seed,—  
 Of me, of me who now am cursed  
 By his fetters dire,—  
 To wring my secret out withal,  
 And learn by whom his sceptre  
 shall  
 Be filched from him, as was at first  
 His heavenly fire.  
 But he never shall enchant me  
 With his honey-lipped persua-  
 sion;  
 Never, never, shall he daunt me,  
 With the oath and threat of passion,  
 Into speaking as they want me,  
 Till he loose this savage chain,  
 And accept the expiation  
 Of my sorrow in his pain.

*Chorus, 2d antistrophe.*

Thou art, sooth, a brave god,  
 And, for all thou hast borne  
 From the stroke of the rod,  
 Nought relaxest from scorn.  
 But thou speakest unto me  
 Too free and unworn;  
 And a terror strikes through me  
 And festers my soul,  
 And I fear, in the roll  
 Of the storm, for thy fate  
 In the ship far from shore;  
 Since the son of Saturnus is hard in  
 his hate,  
 And unmoved in his heart ever-  
 more.

*Prometheus.* I know that Zeus is  
 stern;  
 I know he metes his justice by his will;  
 And yet his soul shall learn  
 More softness when once broken by  
 this ill;  
 And, curbing his unconquerable  
 vaunt,  
 He shall rush on in fear to meet with  
 me  
 Who rush to meet with him in agony,  
 To issues of harmonious covenant.

*Chorus.* Remove the veil from all  
 things, and relate  
 The story to us, — of what crime ac-  
 cused,  
 Zeus smites thee with dishonorable  
 pangs.  
 Speak, if to teach us do not grieve  
 thyself.

*Prometheus.* The utterance of these  
 things is torture to me,  
 But so, too, is their silence: each way  
 lies  
 Woe strong as fate.

When gods began with wrath,  
 And war rose up between their starry  
 brows,  
 Some choosing to cast Chronos from  
 his throne  
 That Zeus might king it there, and  
 some in haste  
 With opposite oaths, that they would  
 have no Zeus  
 To rule the gods forever, — I, who  
 brought  
 The counsel I thought meetest, could  
 not move  
 The Titans, children of the Heaven  
 and Earth,  
 What time, disdainingly in their rugged  
 souls

My subtle machinations, they as-  
 sumed  
 It was an easy thing for force to  
 take  
 The mastery of fate. My mother,  
 then,  
 Who is called not only Themis, but  
 Earth too,  
 (Her single beauty joys in many  
 names)  
 Did teach me with reiterant prophecy  
 What future should be, and how con-  
 quering gods  
 Should not prevail by strength and  
 violence,  
 But by guile only. When I told them  
 so,  
 They would not deign to contemplate  
 the truth  
 On all sides round; whereat I deemed  
 it best  
 To lead my willing mother upwardly,  
 And set my Themis face to face with  
 Zeus  
 As willing to receive her. Tartarus,  
 With its abysmal cloister of the Dark,  
 Because I gave that counsel, covers  
 up  
 The antique Chronos and his siding  
 hosts,  
 And, by that counsel helped, the king  
 of gods  
 Hath recompensed me with these bit-  
 ter pangs;  
 For kingship wears a cancer at the  
 heart, —  
 Distrust in friendship. Do ye also  
 ask  
 What crime it is for which he tortures  
 me?  
 That shall be clear before you. When  
 at first  
 He filled his father's throne, he in-  
 stantly  
 Made various gifts of glory to the  
 gods,  
 And dealt the empire out. Alone of  
 men,  
 Of miserable men, he took no count,  
 But yearned to sweep their track off  
 from the world,  
 And plant a newer race there. Not a  
 god  
 Resisted such desire, except myself.  
 I dared it! I drew mortals back to  
 light,  
 From meditated ruin deep as hell!  
 For which wrong I am bent down in  
 these pangs

Dreadful to suffer, mournful to behold,  
 And I who pitied man am thought myself  
 Unworthy of pity; while I render out  
 Deep rhythms of anguish 'neath the harping hand  
 That strikes me thus,—a sight to shame your Zeus!

*Chorus.* Hard as thy chains, and cold as all these rocks,  
 Is he, Prometheus, who withholds his heart  
 From joining in thy woe. I yearned before  
 To fly this sight; and, now I gaze on it,  
 I sicken inwards.

*Prometheus.* To my friends, indeed,  
 I must be a sad sight.

*Chorus.* And didst thou sin  
 No more than so?

*Prometheus.* I did restrain besides  
 My mortals from premeditating death.

*Chorus.* How didst thou medicine  
 the plague-fear of death?

*Prometheus.* I set blind Hopes to inhabit  
 in their house.

*Chorus.* By that gift thou didst help  
 thy mortals well.

*Prometheus.* I gave them also fire.

*Chorus.* And have they now,  
 Those creatures of a day, the red-eyed fire?

*Prometheus.* They have, and shall learn  
 by it many arts.

*Chorus.* And truly for such sins  
 Zeus tortures thee,  
 And will remit no anguish? Is there  
 set

No limit before thee to thine agony?

*Prometheus.* No other—only what  
 seems good to him.

*Chorus.* And how will it seem good?  
 what hope remains?

Seest thou not that thou hast sinned?  
 But that thou hast sinned

It glads me not to speak of, and  
 grieves thee;

Then let it pass from both, and seek  
 thyself

Some outlet from distress.

*Prometheus.* It is in truth  
 An easy thing to stand aloof from  
 pain,

And lavish exhortation and advice  
 On one vexed sorely by it. I have  
 known

All in prevision. By my choice, my  
 choice,  
 I freely sinned,—I will confess my  
 sin,—

And, helping mortals, found mine  
 own despair.

I did not think indeed that I should  
 pine

Beneath such pangs against such  
 skyey rocks,

Doomed to this drear hill, and no  
 neighboring

Of any life. But mourn not ye for  
 griefs

I bear to-day: hear rather, dropping  
 down

To the plain, how other woes creep  
 on to me,

And learn the consummation of my  
 doom.

Beseech you, nymphs, beseech you,  
 grieve for me

Who now am grieving; for Grief  
 walks the earth,

And sits down at the foot of each by  
 turns.

*Chorus.* We hear the deep clash of  
 thy words,

Prometheus, and obey.

And I spring with a rapid foot  
 away

From the rushing ear and the holy  
 air,

The track of birds;

And I drop to the rugged ground,  
 and there

Await the tale of thy despair.

*OCEANUS enters.*

*Oceanus.* I reach the bourne of my  
 weary road

Where I may see and answer  
 thee,

Prometheus, in thine agony.

On the back of the quick-winged bird  
 I glode,

And I bridled him in

With the will of a god.

Behold, thy sorrow aches in me

Constrained by the force of kin.

Nay, though that tie were all un-  
 done,

For the life of none beneath the sun  
 Would I seek a larger benison

Than I seek for thine.

And thou shalt learn my words are  
 truth,

That no fair parlance of the mouth  
 Grows falsely out of mine.

Now give me a deed to prove my  
faith;  
For no faster friend is named in  
breath

Than I, Oceanus, am thine

*Prometheus.* Hal! what has brought  
thee? Hast thou also come  
To look upon my woe? How hast  
thou dared  
To leave the depths called after thee?  
the caves

Self-hewn, and self-roofed with spon-  
taneous rock,

To visit Earth, the mother of my  
chain?

Hast come, indeed, to view my doom,  
and mourn

That I should sorrow thus? Gaze  
on, and see

How I, the fast friend of your Zeus,  
— how I

The erector of the empire in his hand,  
Am bent beneath that hand in this  
despair.

*Oceanus.* Prometheus, I behold;  
and I would fain

Exhort thee, though already subtle  
enough,

To a better wisdom. Titan, know  
thyself,

And take new softness to thy man-  
ners, since

A new king rules the gods. If words  
like these,

Harsh words and trenchant, thou  
wilt fling abroad,

Zeus haply, though he sit so far and  
high,

May hear thee do it, and so this wrath  
of his,

Which now affects thee fiercely, shall  
appear

A mere child's sport at vengeance.  
Wretched god,

Rather dismiss the passion which  
thou hast,

And seek a change from grief. Per-  
haps I seem

To address thee with old saws and  
outworn sense:

Yet such a curse, Prometheus, surely  
waits

On lips that speak too proudly: thou,  
meantime,

Art none the meeke, nor dost yield  
a jot

To evil circumstance, preparing still  
To swell the account of grief with  
other griefs

Than what are borne. Beseech thee,  
use me, then,

For counsel: do not spurn against the  
pricks,

Seeing that who reigns, reigns by  
cruelty

Instead of right. And now I go  
from hence,

And will endeavor if a power of  
mine

Can break thy fetters through. For  
thee — be calm,

And smooth thy words from passion.  
Knowest thou not

Of perfect knowledge, thou who  
knowest too much,

That, where the tongue wags, ruin  
never lags?

*Prometheus.* I gratulate thee who  
hast shared and dared

All things with me, except their pen-  
alty.

Enough so! leave these thoughts.  
It cannot be

That thou shouldst move him. He  
may *not* be moved;

And *thou*, beware of sorrow on this  
road.

*Oceanus.* Ay! ever wiser for an-  
other's use

Than thine. The event, and not the  
prophecy,

Attests it to me. Yet, where now I  
rush,

Thy wisdom hath no power to drag  
me back,

Because I glory, glory, to go hence,  
And win for thee deliverance from

thy pangs.  
As a free gift from Zeus.

*Prometheus.* Why there, again,  
I give thee gratulation and applause.

Thou lackest no good will. But, as  
for deeds,

Do nought! 'twere all done vainly,  
helping nought,

Whatever thou wouldst do. Rather  
take rest,

And keep thyself from evil. If I  
grieve,

I do not therefore wish to multiply  
The griefs of others. Verily, not so!

For still my brother's doom doth vex  
my soul, —

My brother Atlas, standing in the  
west.

Shouldering the column of the heaven  
and earth,

A difficult burden! I have also seen,

And pitied as I saw, the earth-born  
 one,  
 The inhabitant of old Cilician caves,  
 The great war-monster of the hundred  
 heads,  
 (All taken and bowed beneath the  
 violent Hand)  
 Typhon the fierce, who did resist the  
 gods,  
 And, hissing slaughter from his dread-  
 ful jaws,  
 Flash out ferocious glory from his eyes  
 As if to storm the throne of Zeus.  
 Whereat,  
 The sleepless arrow of Zeus flew  
 straight at him,  
 The headlong bolt of thunder breath-  
 ing flame,  
 And struck him downward from his  
 eminence  
 Of exultation; through the very soul  
 It struck him, and his strength was  
 withered up  
 To ashes, thunder-blasted. Now he  
 lies,  
 A helpless trunk, supinely, at full-  
 length  
 Beside the strait of ocean, spurred into  
 By roots of Ætna, high upon whose  
 tops  
 Hephæstus sits, and strikes the flash-  
 ing ore.  
 From thence the rivers of fire shall  
 burst away  
 Hereafter, and devour with savage  
 jaws  
 The equal plains of fruitful Sicily,  
 Such passion he shall boil back in hot  
 darts  
 Of an insatiate fury and sough of flame,  
 Fallen Typhon, howsoever struck and  
 charred  
 By Zeus's bolted thunder. But for  
 thee,  
 Thou art not so unlearned as to need  
 My teaching; let thy knowledge save  
 thyself.  
 I quaff the full cup of a present doom,  
 And wait till Zeus hath quenched his  
 will in wrath.  
*Oceanus.* Prometheus, art thou ig-  
 norant of this,  
 That words do medicine anger?  
*Prometheus.* If the word  
 With reasonable softness touch the  
 soul,  
 And, where the parts are ulcerous,  
 sear them not  
 By any rudeness.

*Oceanus.* With a noble aim  
 To dare as nobly—is there harm in  
*that?*

Dost thou discern it? Teach me.

*Prometheus.* I discern  
 Vain aspiration, unresultive work.

*Oceanus.* Then suffer me to bear  
 the brunt of this,  
 Since it is profitable that one who is  
 wise

Should seem not wise at all.

*Prometheus.* And such would  
 seem

My very crime.

*Oceanus.* In truth thine argu-  
 ment

Sends me back home.

*Prometheus.* Lest any lament  
 for me

Should east thee down to hate.

*Oceanus.* The hate of him  
 Who sits a new king on the absolute  
 throne?

*Prometheus.* Beware of him, lest  
 thine heart grieve by him.

*Oceanus.* Thy doom, Prometheus,  
 be my teacher!

*Prometheus.* Go!

Depart! Beware! And keep the  
 mind thou hast.

*Oceanus.* Thy words drive after, as  
 I rush before.

Lo, my four-footed bird sweeps smooth  
 and wide

The flats of air with balanced pinions,  
 glad

To bend his knee at home in the ocean-  
 stall.

[*OCEANUS departs.*]

*Chorus, 1st strophe.*

I moan thy fate, I moan for thee,  
 Prometheus! From my eyes too  
 tender

Drop after drop incessantly

The tears of my heart's pity render  
 My cheeks wet from their fountains  
 free;

Because that Zeus, the stern and cold,  
 Whose law is taken from his breast,  
 Uplifts his sceptre manifest  
 Over the gods of old.

*1st antistrophe.*

All the land is moaning  
 With a murmured plaint to-day;  
 All the mortal nations  
 Having habitations  
 In the holy Asia

Are a dirge entoning  
For thine honor and thy brothers',  
Once majestic beyond others  
In the old belief, —  
Now are groaning in the groaning  
Of thy deep-voiced grief.

*2d strophe*

Mourn the maids inhabitant  
Of the Colchian land,  
Who with white, calm bosoms stand  
In the battle's roar :  
Mourn the Scythian tribes that haunt  
The verge of earth, Mæotis' shore.

*2d antistrophe.*

Yea! Arabia's battle crown,  
And dwellers in the beetling  
town  
Mt. Caucasus sublimely nears —  
An iron squadron, thundering  
down  
With the sharp-prowed spears.

But one other before have I seen to  
remain  
By invincible pain,  
Bound and vanquished, — one Titan !  
'twas Atlas, who bears  
In a curse from the gods, by that  
strength of his own  
Which he evermore wears,  
The weight of the heaven on his shoul-  
der alone,  
While he sighs up the stars;  
And the tides of the ocean wail, burst-  
ing their bars;  
Murmurs still the profound,  
And black Hades roars up through the  
chasm of the ground,  
And the fountains of pure-running  
rivers moan low  
In a pathos of woe.

*Prometheus.* Beseech you, think not  
I am silent thus  
Through pride or scorn. I only gnaw  
my heart  
With meditation, seeing myself so  
wronged.  
For see — their honors to these new-  
made gods,  
What other gave but I, and dealt them  
out  
With distribution? Ay! but here I  
am dumb:  
For here I should repeat your knowl-  
edge to you,  
If I spake aught. List rather to the  
deeds

I did for mortals; how, being fools  
before,  
I made them wise and true in aim of  
soul.  
And let me tell you, — not as taunt-  
ing men,  
But teaching you the intention of my  
gifts, —  
How, first beholding, they beheld in  
vain,  
And, hearing, heard not, but, like  
shapes in dreams,  
Mixed all things wildly down the te-  
dious time.  
Nor knew to build a house against the  
sun  
With wicketed sides, nor any wood-  
craft knew,  
But lived, like silly ants, beneath the  
ground  
In hollow caves unsunned. There  
came to them  
No steadfast sign of winter, nor of  
spring  
Flower-perfumed, nor of summer full  
of fruit,  
But blindly and lawlessly they did all  
things,  
Until I taught them how the stars do  
rise  
And set in mystery, and devised for  
them  
Number, the inducer of philoso-  
phies,  
The synthesis of letters, and, beside,  
The artificer of all things, memory,  
That sweet muse-mother. I was first  
to yoke  
The servile beasts in couples, carry-  
ing  
An heirdom of man's burdens on their  
backs.  
I joined to chariots, steeds, that love  
the bit  
They champ at, — the chief pomp of  
golden ease.  
And none but I originated ships,  
The seaman's chariots, wanderings on  
the brine  
With linen wings. And I — oh, mis-  
erable! —  
Who did devise for mortals all these  
arts,  
Have no device left now to save my-  
self  
From the woe I suffer.

*Chorus.* Most unseemly woe  
Thou sufferest, and dost stagger from  
the sense

Bewildered! Like a bad leech falling sick.

Thou art faint at soul, and canst not find the drugs

Required to save thyself.

*Prometheus.* Harken the rest, And marvel further, what more arts and means

I did invent,—this, greatest: if a man

Fell sick, there was no cure, nor esculent

Nor chrym nor liquid, but for lack of drugs

Men pined and wasted, till I showed them all

Those mixtures of emollient remedies

Whereby they might be rescued from disease.

I fixed the various rules of mantic art,

Discerned the vision from the common dream,

Instructed them in vocal auguries Hard to interpret, and defined as plain

The wayside omens,—flights of crook-clawed birds,—

Showed which are by their nature fortunate,

And which not so, and what the food of each,

And what the hates, affections, social needs

Of all to one another,—taught what sign

Of visceral lightness, colored to a shade,

May charm the genial gods, and what fair spots

Commend the lung and liver. Burning so

The limbs incased in fat, and the long chine,

I led my mortals on to an art abstruse,

And cleared their eyes to the image in the fire,

Erst filmed in dark. Enough said now of this.

For the other helps of man hid underground,

The iron and the brass, silver and gold,

Can any dare affirm he found them out

Before me? None, I know! unless he choose

To lie in his vault. In one word learn the whole,—

That all arts came to mortals from Prometheus.

*Chorus.* Give mortals now no impatient help,

Neglecting thine own sorrow. I have hope still

To see thee, breaking from the fetter here,

Stand up as strong as Zeus.

*Prometheus.* This ends not thus, The oracular fate ordains. I must be bowed

By infinite woes and pangs to escape this chain.

Necessity is stronger than mine art.

*Chorus.* Who holds the helm of that Necessity?

*Prometheus.* The threefold Fates and the unforgetting Furies.

*Chorus.* Is Zeus less absolute than these are?

*Prometheus.* Yea,

And therefore cannot fly what is ordained.

*Chorus.* What is ordained for Zeus, except to be

A king forever?

*Prometheus.* 'Tis too early yet For thee to learn it: ask no more.

*Chorus.* Perhaps Thy secret may be something holy?

*Prometheus.* Turn To another matter: this, it is not time

To speak abroad, but utterly to veil

Insilence. For by that same secret kept, I 'scape this chain's dishonor, and its woe.

*Chorus, 1st strophe.*

Never, oh never,

May Zeus, the all-giver,

Wrestle down from his throne

In that might of his own

To antagonize mine!

Nor let me delay

As I bend on my way

Toward the gods of the shrine

Where the altar is full

Of the blood of the bull,

Near the tossing brine

Of Ocean my father.

May no sin be sped in the word that is said,

But my vow be rather

Consummated,

Nor evermore fail, nor evermore pine.



*1st antistrophe.*

'Tis sweet to have  
Life lengthened out  
With hopes proved brave  
By the very doubt,  
Till the spirit infold  
Those manifest joys which were  
foretold.

But I thrill to behold  
Thee, victim doomed,  
By the countless cares  
And the drear despairs  
Forever consumed, —  
And all because thou, who art fear-  
less now  
Of Zeus above,  
Didst overflow for mankind below  
With a free-souled, reverent love.

Ah, friend, behold and see!  
What's all the beauty of humanity?  
Can it be fair?

What's all the strength? Is it  
strong?

And what hope can they bear,  
These dying livers, living one day  
long?

Ah, seest thou not, my friend,  
How feeble and slow,  
And like a dream, doth go  
This poor blind manhood, drifted  
from its end?

And how no mortal wranglings  
can confuse  
The harmony of Zeus?

Prometheus, I have learnt these  
things

From the sorrow in thy face.  
Another song did fold its wings  
Upon my lips in other days.  
When round the bath and round  
the bed

The hymeneal chant instead  
I sang for thee, and smiled,  
And thou didst lead, with gifts and  
vows,

Hesione, my father's child,  
To be thy wedded spouse.

*Io enters.*

*Io.* What land is this? what people  
is here?

And who is he that writhes, I see,  
In the rock-hung chain?

Now what is the crime that hath  
brought thee to pain?

Now what is the land — make answer  
free —

Which I wander through in my wrong  
and fear?

Ah, ah, ah me!

The gad-fly stingeth to agony!  
O Earth, keep off that phantasm pale  
Of earth-born Argus! — ah! I quail  
When my soul descries

That herdsman with the myriad eyes  
Which seem, as he comes, one crafty  
eye.

Graves hide him not, though he  
should die;

But he doggeth me in my misery  
From the roots of death, on high, on  
high;

And along the sands of the siding  
deep,

All famine-worn, he follows me,  
And his waxen reed doth undersound  
The waters round,

And giveth a measure that giveth  
sleep.

Woe, woe, woe!

Where shall my weary course be  
done?

What wouldst thou with me, Saturn's  
son?

And in what have I sinned, that I  
should go

Thus yoked to grief by thine hand  
forever?

Ah, ah! dost vex me so

That I madden and shiver  
Stung through with dread?

Flash the fire down to burn me!

Heave the earth up to cover me!

Plunge me in the deep, with the salt  
waves over me,

That the sea-beasts may be fed!

O king do not spurn me

In my prayer!

For this wandering everlonger,  
evermore,

Hath overworn me,

And I know not on what shore

I may rest from my despair.

*Chorus.* Hearest thou what the ox-  
horned maiden saith?

*Prometheus.* How could I choose  
but harken what she saith,  
The frenzied maiden? — Inachus's  
child? —

Who love-warms Zeus's heart, and  
now is lashed

By Heré's hate along the unending  
ways?

*Io.* Who taught thee to articulate  
that name, —

My father's? Speak to his child  
By grief and shame defiled!  
Who art thou, victim, thou who dost  
acclaim

Mine anguish in true words on the  
wide air,

And callest, too, by name the curse  
that came

From Heré unaware,  
To waste and pierce me with its mad-  
dening goad?

Ah, ah, I leap  
With the pang of the hungry; I bound  
on the road;

I am driven by my doom;  
I am overcome

By the wrath of an enemy strong and  
deep!

Are any of those who have tasted  
pain,

Alas! as wretched as I?  
Now tell me plain, doth aught remain  
For my soul to endure beneath the sky?

Is there any help to be holpen by?  
If knowledge be in thee, let it be  
said!

Cry aloud — cry  
To the wandering, woful maid.

*Prometheus.* Whatever thou wouldst  
learn, I will declare;

No riddle upon my lips, but such  
straight words

As friends should use to each other  
when they talk.

Thou seest Prometheus, who gave  
mortals fire.

*Io.* O common help of all men,  
known of all,

O miserable Prometheus, for what  
cause

Dost thou endure thus?

*Prometheus.* I have done with wail  
For my own griefs but lately.

*Io.* Wilt thou not  
Vouchsafe the boon to me?

*Prometheus.* Say what thou wilt,  
For I vouchsafe all.

*Io.* Speak, then, and reveal  
Who shut thee in this chasm.

*Prometheus.* The will of Zeus,  
The hand of his Hephaestus.

*Io.* And what crime  
Dost expiate so?

*Prometheus.* Enough for thee I  
have told

In so much only.

*Io.* Nay, but show besides  
The limit of my wandering, and the  
time

Which yet is lacking to fulfil my  
grief.

*Prometheus.* Why, not to know were  
better than to know

For such as thou.

*Io.* Beseech thee, blind me not  
To that which I must suffer.

*Prometheus.* If I do,  
The reason is not that I grudge a  
boon.

*Io.* What reason, then, prevents thy  
speaking out?

*Prometheus.* No grudging, but a  
fear to break thine heart.

*Io.* Less care for me, I pray thee.  
Certainty

I count for advantage.

*Prometheus.* Thou wilt have it so,  
And therefore I must speak. Now  
hear —

*Chorus.* Not yet.  
Give half the guerdon my way. Let  
us learn

First what the curse is that befell the  
maid,

Her own voice telling her own wast-  
ing woes:

The sequence of that anguish shall  
await

The teaching of thy lips.

*Prometheus.* It doth behoove  
That thou, maid *Io*, shouldst vouch-  
safe to these

The grace they pray, — the more, be-  
cause they are called

Thy father's sisters; since to open out  
And mourn out grief, where it is possi-  
ble

To draw a tear from the audience, is  
a work

That pays its own price well.

*Io.* I cannot choose  
But trust you, nymphs, and tell you  
all ye ask,

In clear words, though I sob amid  
my speech

In speaking of the storm-curse sent  
from Zeus,

And of my beauty, from which height  
it took

Its swoop on me, poor wretch! left  
thus deformed

And monstrous to your eyes. For  
evermore

Around my virgin-chamber, wander-  
ing went

The nightly visions which entreated me  
 With syllabled smooth sweetness,—  
 “Blessed maid,  
 Why lengthen out thy maiden hours,  
 when fate  
 Permits the noblest spousal in the  
 world?  
 When Zeus burns’ with the arrow of  
 thy love,  
 And fain would touch thy beauty?—  
 Maiden, thou  
 Despise not Zeus! depart to Lerné’s  
 mead  
 That’s green around thy father’s  
 flocks and stalls,  
 Until the passion of the heavenly  
 Eye  
 Be quenched in sight.” Such dreams  
 did all night long  
 Constrain me, — me, unhappy! — till I  
 dared  
 To tell my father how they trod the  
 dark  
 With visionary steps. Whereat he  
 sent  
 His frequent heralds to the Pythian  
 fane,  
 And also to Dodona, and inquired  
 How best, by act or speech, to please  
 the gods.  
 The same returning brought back  
 oracles  
 Of doubtful sense, indefinite response,  
 Dark to interpret; but at last there  
 came  
 To Inachus an answer that was clear,  
 Thrown straight as any bolt, and  
 spoken out,—  
 This: “He should drive me from my  
 home and land,  
 And bid me wander to the extreme  
 verge  
 Of all the earth; or, if he willed it  
 not,  
 Should have a thunder with a fiery  
 eye  
 Leap straight from Zeus to burn up  
 all his race  
 To the last root of it.” By which  
 Loxian word  
 Subdued, he drove me forth, and shut  
 me out,  
 He loath, me loath; but Zeus’s violent  
 bit  
 Compelled him to the deed: when in-  
 stantly  
 My body and soul were changèd and  
 distraught,

And, hornèd as ye see, and spurred  
 along  
 By the fanged insect, with a maniac  
 leap  
 I rushed on to Cenchrea’s limpid  
 stream,  
 And Lerné’s fountain-water. There,  
 the earth-born,  
 The herdsman Argus, most inmitiga-  
 ble  
 Of wrath, did find me out, and track  
 me out  
 With countless eyes set staring at my  
 steps;  
 And though an unexpected sudden  
 doom  
 Drew him from life, I, curse-torment-  
 ed still,  
 Am driven from land to land before  
 the scourge  
 The gods hold o’er me. So thou hast  
 heard the past;  
 And, if a bitter future thou canst tell,  
 Speak on. I charge thee, do not flat-  
 ter me,  
 Through pity, with false words; for  
 in my mind  
 Deceiving works more shame than  
 torturing doth.

*Chorus.*

Ah, silence here!  
 Nevermore, nevermore,  
 Would I languish for  
 The stranger’s word  
 To thrill in mine ear—  
 Nevermore for the wrong and the woe  
 and the fear  
 So hard to behold,  
 So cruel to bear,  
 Piercing my soul with a double-edged  
 sword  
 Of a sliding cold.  
 Ah, Fate! ah, me!  
 I shudder to see  
 This wandering maid in her agony.

*Prometheus.* Grief is too quick in  
 thee, and fear too full:  
 Be patient till thou hast learnt the rest.

*Chorus.* Speak: teach,  
 To those who are sad already, it  
 seems sweet,  
 By clear foreknowledge to make per-  
 fect, pain.

*Prometheus.* The boon ye asked me  
 first was lightly won;  
 For first ye asked the story of this  
 maid’s grief,

As her own lips might tell it. Now  
 remains  
 To list what other sorrows she so  
 young  
 Must bear from Heré. Inachus's  
 child,  
 O thou! drop down thy soul my  
 weighty words,  
 And measure out the landmarks  
 which are set  
 To end thy wandering. Toward the  
 orient sun  
 First turn thy face from mine, and  
 journey on  
 Along the desert-flats till thou shalt  
 come  
 Where Scythia's shepherd-peoples  
 dwell aloft,  
 Perched in wheeled wagons under  
 woven roofs,  
 And twang the rapid arrow past the  
 bow.  
 Approach them not, but, siding in  
 thy course  
 The rugged shore-rocks resonant to  
 the sea.  
 Depart that country. On the left  
 hand dwell  
 The iron-workers, called the Chaly-  
 bes,  
 Of whom beware, for certes they are  
 uncouth,  
 And nowise bland to strangers.  
 Reaching so  
 The stream Hybristes (well the  
*scorner* called),  
 Attempt no passage, — it is hard to  
 pass, —  
 Or ere thou come to Caucasus itself,  
 That highest of mountains, where the  
 river leaps  
 The precipice in his strength. Thou  
 must toil up  
 Those mountain-tops that neighbor  
 with the stars,  
 And tread the south way, and draw  
 near, at last,  
 The Amazonian host that hateth  
 man,  
 Inhabitants of Themiseyra, close  
 Upon Thermodon, where the sea's  
 rough jaw  
 Doth gnash at Salmydessa, and pro-  
 vide  
 A cruel host to seamen, and to ships  
 A stepdame. They, with unreluctant  
 hand,  
 Shall lead thee on and on till thou  
 arrive

Just where the ocean-gates show nar-  
 rowest  
 On the Cimmerian isthmus. Leaving  
 which,  
 Behooves thee swim with fortitude of  
 soul  
 The strait Mæotis. Ay, and ever-  
 more  
 That traverse shall be famous on  
 men's lips,  
 That strait called Bosphorus, the  
 horned one's road,  
 So named because of thee, who so  
 wilt pass  
 From Europe's plain to Asia's conti-  
 nent.  
 How think ye, nymphs? the king of  
 gods appears  
 Impartial in ferocious deeds? Be-  
 hold!  
 The god desirous of this mortal's love  
 Hath cursed her with these wander-  
 ings. Ah, fair child,  
 Thou hast met a bitter groom for bri-  
 dal troth!  
 For all thou yet hast heard can only  
 prove  
 The incompleated prelude of thy doom.  
*Io.* Ah, ah!  
*Prometheus.* Is't thy turn now to  
 shriek and moan?  
 How wilt thou, when thou hast har-  
 kened what remains?  
*Chorus.* Besides the grief thou hast  
 told, can aught remain?  
*Prometheus.* A sea of foredoomed  
 evil worked to storm.  
*Io.* What boots my life, then? why  
 not cast myself  
 Down headlong from this miserable  
 rock,  
 That, dashed against the flats, I may  
 redeem  
 My soul from sorrow? Better once  
 to die  
 Than day by day to suffer.  
*Prometheus.* Verily,  
 It would be hard for thee to bear my  
 woe  
 For whom it is appointed not to die.  
 Death frees from woe; but I before-  
 me see  
 In all my far prevision not a bound  
 To all I suffer, ere that Zeus shall fall  
 From being a king.  
*Io.* And can it ever be  
 That Zeus shall fall from empire?  
*Prometheus.* *Thou,* methinks,  
 Wouldst take some joy to see it.

*Io.* Could I choose?  
I who endure such pangs now, by that  
god!

*Prometheus.* Learn from me, there-  
fore, that the event shall be.

*Io.* By whom shall his imperial  
sceptred hand  
Be emptied so?

*Prometheus.* Himself shall spoil  
himself,  
Through his idiotic counsels.

*Io.* How? declare,  
Unless the word bring evil.

*Prometheus.* He shall wed.  
And in the marriage-bond be joined  
to grief.

*Io.* A heavenly bride, or human?  
Speak it out,  
If it be utterable.

*Prometheus.* Why should I say  
which?  
It ought not to be uttered, verily.

*Io.* Then  
It is his wife shall tear him from his  
throne?

*Prometheus.* It is his wife shall bear  
a son to him  
More mighty than the father.

*Io.* From this doom  
Hath he no refuge?

*Prometheus.* None: or ere that I  
Loosed from these fetters—

*Io.* Yea; but who shall loose  
While Zeus is adverse?

*Prometheus.* One who is born of thee:  
It is ordained so.

*Io.* What is this thou sayest?  
A son of mine shall liberate thee  
from woe?

*Prometheus.* After ten generations  
count three more,  
And find him in the third.

*Io.* The oracle  
Remains obscure.

*Prometheus.* And search it not to  
learn  
Thine own griefs from it.

*Io.* Point me not to a good  
To leave me straight bereaved.

*Prometheus.* I am prepared  
To grant thee one of two things.

*Io.* But which two?  
Set them before me; grant me power  
to choose.

*Prometheus.* I grant it; choose now!  
Shall I name aloud

What griefs remain to wound thee,  
or what hand

Shall save me out of mine?

*Chorus.* Vouchsafe, O god,  
The one grace of the twain to her  
who prays,

The next to me, and turn back nei-  
ther prayer

Dishonored by denial. To herself  
Recount the future wandering of her  
feet;

Then point me to the looser of thy  
chain,

Because I yearn to know him.

*Prometheus.* Since ye will,  
Of absolute will, this knowledge, I  
will set

No contrary against it, nor keep back  
A word of all ye ask for. *Io,* first  
To thee I must relate thy wandering  
course

Far winding. As I tell it, write it  
down

In thy soul's book of memories.  
When thou hast past

The reflux bound that parts two  
continents,

Track on the footsteps of the orient  
sun

In his own fire across the roar of  
seas,—

Fly till thou hast reached the Gor-  
gonæan flats

Beside Cisthené. There the Phœrei-  
des,

Three ancient maidens, live, with  
shape of swan,

One tooth between them, and one  
common eye,

On whom the sun doth never look at  
all

With all his rays, nor evermore the  
moon

When she looks through the night.  
A near to whom

Are the Gorgon sisters three, en-  
clothed with wings,

With twisted snakes for ringlets,  
man-abhorred:

There is no mortal gazes in their face,  
And gazing can breathe on. I speak  
of such

To guard thee from their horror. Ay,  
and list

Another tale of a dreadful sight: be-  
ware

The Griffins, those unbarking dogs of  
Zeus,

Those sharp-mouthed dogs!—and  
the Arimaspians host

Of one-eyed horsemen, habiting be-  
side

The river of Pluto that runs bright  
with gold:  
Approach them not, beseech thee.  
Presently  
Thou'lt come to a distant land, a  
dusky tribe  
Of dwellers at the fountain of the  
Sun,  
Whence flows the River Æthiops:  
wind along  
Its banks, and turn off at the cata-  
racts,  
Just as the Nile pours from the Byb-  
line hills  
His holy and sweet wave: his course  
shall guide  
Thine own to that triangular Nile-  
ground  
Where, Io, is ordained for thee and  
thine  
A lengthened exile. Have I said in  
this  
Aught darkly or incompletely?—  
now repeat  
The question, make the knowledge  
fuller! Io,  
I have more leisure than I covet here.  
*Chorus.* If thou canst tell us aught  
that's left untold,  
Or loosely told, of her most dreary  
flight,  
Declare it straight; but, if thou hast  
uttered all,  
Grant us that latter grace for which  
we prayed,  
Remembering how we prayed it.  
*Prometheus.* She has heard  
The uttermost of her wandering.  
There it ends.  
But, that she may be certain not to  
have heard  
All vainly, I will speak what she en-  
dured  
Ere coming hither, and invoke the  
past  
To prove my prescience true. And  
so—to leave  
A multitude of words, and pass at  
once  
To the subject of thy course—when  
thou hadst gone  
To those Molossian plains which  
sweep around  
Dodona shouldering Heaven, where-  
by the fane  
Of Zeus Thesprotian keepeth oracle,  
And, wonder past belief, where oaks  
do wave  
Articulate adjurations — (ay, the same

Saluted thee in no perplexèd phrase,  
But clear with glory, noble wife of  
Zeus  
That shouldst be, there some sweet-  
ness took thy sense!)  
Thou didst rush further onward,  
stung along  
The ocean-shore, toward Rhea's  
mighty bay,  
And, tost back from it, wast tost to it  
again  
In stormy evolution: and know well,  
In coming time that hollow of the sea  
Shall bear the name Ionian, and pre-  
sent  
A monument of Io's passage through,  
Unto all mortals. Be these words the  
signs  
Of my soul's power to look beyond  
the veil  
Of visible things. The rest to you  
and her  
I will declare in common audience,  
nymphs,  
Returning thither where my speech  
brake off.  
There is a town, Canobus, built upon  
The earth's fair margin, at the mouth  
of Nile,  
And on the mound washed up by it:  
Io, there  
Shall Zeus give back to thee thy per-  
fect mind,  
And only by the pressure and the  
touch  
Of a hand not terrible; and thou to  
Zeus  
Shalt bear a dusky son who shall be  
called  
Thence Epaphus, *Touched*. That son  
shall pluck the fruit  
Of all that land wide-watered by the  
flow  
Of Nile; but after him, when counting  
out  
As far as the fifth full generation,  
then  
Full fifty maidens, a fair woman-race,  
Shall back to Argos turn reluctantly,  
To fly the proffered nuptials of their  
kin,  
Their father's brothers. These being  
passion-struck,  
Like falcons bearing hard on flying  
doves,  
Shall follow hunting at a quarry of  
love  
They should not hunt; till envious  
Heaven maintain

A curse betwixt that beauty and their  
 desire,  
 And Greece receive them, to be over-  
 come  
 In murderous woman-war by fierce  
 red hands  
 Kept savage by the night. For every  
 wife  
 Shall slay a husband, dyeing deep in  
 blood  
 The sword of a double edge — (I wish  
 indeed  
 As fair a marriage-joy to all my foes!)  
 One bride alone shall fail to smite to  
 death  
 The head upon her pillow, touched  
 with love,  
 Made impotent of purpose, and im-  
 pelled  
 To choose the lesser evil, — shame on  
 her cheeks,  
 Than blood-guilt on her hands; which  
 bride shall bear  
 A royal race in Argos. Tedious speech  
 Were needed to relate particulars  
 Of these things; 'tis enough that from  
 her seed  
 Shall spring the strong He, famous  
 with the bow,  
 Whose arm shall break my fetters off.  
 Behold,  
 My mother Themis, that old Titaness,  
 Delivered to me such an oracle;  
 But how and when, I should be long  
 to speak,  
 And thou, in hearing, wouldst not  
 gain at all.

*Io.* Elelen, elelen!  
 How the spasm and the pain,  
 And the fire on the brain,  
 Strike, burning me through!  
 How the sting of the curse, all aflame  
 as it flew,  
 Pricks me onward again!  
 How my heart in its terror is spurning  
 my breast,  
 And my eyes like the wheels of a  
 chariot roll round!  
 I am whirled from my course, to the  
 east, to the west,  
 In the whirlwind of frenzy all mad-  
 ly inwound;  
 And my mouth is unbridled for au-  
 guish and hate,  
 And my words beat in vain, in wild  
 storms of unrest,  
 On the sea of my desolate fate.

[*Io rushes out.*]

*Chorus, — strophe.*

Oh, wise was he, oh, wise was he,  
 Who first within his spirit knew,  
 And with his tongue declared it true,  
 That love comes best that comes unto  
 The equal of degree!  
 And that the poor and that the low  
 Should seek no love from those above,  
 Whose souls are fluttered with the  
 flow  
 Of airs about their golden height,  
 Or proud because they see arow  
 Ancestral crowns of light.

*Antistrophe.*

Oh, never, never, may ye, Fates,  
 Behold me with your awful eyes  
 Lift mine too fondly up the skies  
 Where Zeus upon the purple waits!  
 Nor let me step too near, too near,  
 To any suitor bright from heaven;  
 Because I see, because I fear,  
 This loveless maiden vexed and laden  
 By this fell curse of Heré, driven  
 On wanderings dread and drear.

*Epode.*

Nay, grant an equal troth instead  
 Of nuptial love, to bind me by!  
 It will not hurt, I shall not dread  
 To meet it in reply.  
 But let not love from those above  
 Revert and fix me, as I said,  
 With that inevitable Eye!  
 I have no sword to fight that fight,  
 I have no strength to tread that  
 path,  
 I know not if my nature hath  
 The power to bear, I cannot see  
 Whither from Zeus's infinite  
 I have the power to flee.

*Prometheus.* Yet Zeus, albeit most  
 absolute of will,  
 Shall turn to meekness, — such a mar-  
 riage-rite  
 He holds in preparation, which anon  
 Shall thrust him headlong from his  
 gerent seat  
 Adown the abysmal void; and so the  
 curse  
 His father Chronos muttered in his  
 fall,  
 As he fell from his ancient throne and  
 cursed,  
 Shall be accomplished wholly. No  
 escape  
 From all that ruin shall the filial  
 Zeus

Find granted to him from any of his gods,  
 Unless I teach him. I the refuge know,  
 And I, the means. Now, therefore, let him sit  
 And brave the imminent doom, and fix his faith  
 On his supernal noises hurtling on  
 With restless hand the bolt that breathes out fire;  
 For these things shall not help him, none of them,  
 Nor hinder his perdition when he falls  
 To shame, and lower than patience: such a foe  
 He doth himself prepare against himself,  
 A wonder of unconquerable hate,  
 An organizer of sublimer fire  
 Than glares in lightnings, and of grander sound  
 Than aught the thunder rolls, out-thundering it,  
 With power to shatter in Poseidon's fist  
 The trident-spear, which, while it plagues the sea,  
 Doth shake the shores around it. Ay, and Zeus,  
 Precipitated thus, shall learn at length  
 The difference betwixt rule and servitude.

*Chorus.* Thou makest threats for Zeus of thy desires.

*Prometheus.* I tell you all these things shall be fulfilled

Even so as I desire them.

*Chorus.* Must we, then, Look out for one shall come to master Zeus?

*Prometheus.* These chains weigh lighter than his sorrows shall.

*Chorus.* How art thou not afraid to utter such words?

*Prometheus.* What should I fear, who cannot die?

*Chorus.* But he Can visit thee with dreder woe than death's.

*Prometheus.* Why, let him do it! I am here, prepared For all things and their pangs.

*Chorus.* The wise are they Who reverence Adrasteia.

*Prometheus.* Reverence thou, Adore thou, flatter thou, whomever reigns,

Whenever reigning! But for me, your Zeus  
 Is less than nothing. Let him act and reign  
 His brief hour out according to his will:  
 He will not, therefore, rule the gods too long.  
 But lo! I see that courier-god of Zeus,  
 That new-made menial of the new-crowned king:  
 He, doubtless, comes to announce to us something new.

*HERMES enters.*

*Hermes.* I speak to thee, the sophist, the talker-down  
 Of scorn by scorn, the sinner against gods,  
 The reverencer of men, the thief of fire,—  
 I speak to thee and adjure thee: Zeus requires  
 Thy declaration of what marriage-rite  
 Thus moves thy vaunt, and shall hereafter cause  
 His fall from empire. Do not wrap thy speech  
 In riddles, but speak clearly. Never cast  
 Ambiguous paths, Prometheus, for my feet,  
 Since Zeus, thou mayst perceive, is scarcely won  
 To merey by such means.

*Prometheus.* A speech well-mouthed  
 In the utterance, and full-minded in the sense,  
 As doth befit a servant of the gods!  
 New gods, ye newly reign, and think, forsooth,  
 Ye dwell in towers too high for any dart  
 To carry a wound there! Have I not stood by  
 While two kings fell from thence? and shall I not  
 Behold the third, the same who rules you now,  
 Fall, shamed to sudden ruin? Do I seem  
 To tremble and quail before your modern gods?  
 Far be it from me! For thyself, depart;  
 Re-tread thy steps in haste. To all thou hast asked  
 I answer nothing.



*Hermes.* Such a wind of pride  
Impelled thee of yore full sail upon  
these rocks.

*Prometheus.* I would not barter —  
learn thou soothly that! —  
My suffering for thy service. I main-  
tain

It is a nobler thing to serve these  
rocks

Than live a faithful slave to father  
Zeus.

Thus upon scorners I retort their  
scorn.

*Hermes.* It seems that thou dost  
glory in thy despair.

*Prometheus.* I glory? Would my  
foes did glory so,

And I stood by to see them! — naming  
whom,

Thou art not unremembered.

*Hermes.* Dost thou charge  
Me also with the blame of thy mis-  
chance?

*Prometheus.* I tell thee I loathe the  
universal gods,

Who, for the good I gave them, ren-  
dered back

The ill of their injustice.

*Hermes.* Thou art mad,  
Thou art raving, Titan, at the fever-  
height.

*Prometheus.* If it be madness to  
abhor my foes,  
May I be mad!

*Hermes.* If thou wert prosperous,  
Thou wouldst be unendurable.

*Prometheus.* Alas!

*Hermes.* Zeus knows not that  
word.

*Prometheus.* But maturing Time  
Teaches all things.

*Hermes.* Howbeit, thou hast not  
learnt

The wisdom yet, thou needest.

*Prometheus.* If I had,  
I should not talk thus with a slave  
like thee.

*Hermes.* No answer thou vouch-  
safest, I believe,  
To the great Sire's requirement.

*Prometheus.* Verily  
I owe him grateful service, and should  
pay it.

*Hermes.* Why, thou dost mock me,  
Titan, as I stood  
A child before thy face.

*Prometheus.* No child, forsooth,  
But yet more foolish than a foolish  
child,

If thou expect that I should answer  
aught

Thy Zeus can ask. No torture from  
his hand,

Nor any machination in the world,  
Shall force mine utterance ere he  
loose, himself,

These cankerous fetters from me.  
For the rest,

Let him now hurl his blanching light-  
nings down,

And with his white-winged snows,  
and mutterings deep

Of subterranean thunders, mix all  
things,

Confound them in disorder. None of  
this

Shall bend my sturdy will, and make  
me speak

The name of his dethroner who shall  
come.

*Hermes.* Can this avail thee? Look  
to it!

*Prometheus.* Long ago  
It was looked forward to, precoun-  
selled of.

*Hermes.* Vain god, take righteous  
courage! Dare for once

To apprehend and front thine agonies  
With a just prudence.

*Prometheus.* Vainly dost thou chafe  
My soul with exhortation, as yonder  
sea

Goes beating on the rock. Oh! think  
no more

That I, fear-struck by Zeus to a wo-  
man's mind,

Will supplicate him, loathed as he is,  
With feminine upliftings of my hands,

To break these chains. Far from me  
be the thought!

*Hermes.* I have indeed, methinks,  
said much in vain,

For still thy heart beneath my show-  
ers of prayers

Lies dry and hard, nay, leaps like a  
young horse

Who bites against the new bit in his  
teeth,

And tugs and struggles against the  
new-tried rein,

Still fiercest in the feeblest thing of  
all,

Which sophism is; since absolute will  
disjoined

From perfect mind is worse than  
weak. Behold,

Unless my words persuade thee, what  
a blast

And whirlwind of inevitable woe  
Must sweep persuasion through thee!

For at first  
The Father will split up this jut of  
rock

With the great thunder and the  
bolted flame,

And hide thy body where a hinge of  
stone

Shall catch it like an arm; and, when  
thou hast passed

A long black time within, thou shalt  
come out

To front the sun while Zeus's winged  
hound,

The strong, carnivorous eagle, shall  
wheel down

To meet thee, self-called to a daily  
feast,

And set his fierce beak in thee, and  
tear off

The long rags of thy flesh, and batten  
deep

Upon thy dusky liver. Do not look  
For any end, moreover, to this curse,  
Or ere some god appear to accept thy  
pangs

On his own head vicarious, and de-  
scend

With unreluctant step the darks of  
hell

And gloomy abysses around Tartarus.  
Then ponder this, — this threat is not  
a growth

Of vain invention; it is spoken and  
meant:

King Zeus's mouth is impotent to lie,  
Consummating the utterance by the  
act.

So, look to it, thou! take heed, and  
nevermore

Forget good counsel to indulge self-  
will.

*Chorus.* Our Hermes suits his rea-  
sons to the times,

At least I think so, since he bids thee  
drop

Self-will for prudent counsel. Yield  
to him!

When the wise err, their wisdom  
makes their shame.

*Prometheus.* Unto me the fore-  
knower, this mandate of power  
He cries, to reveal it.

What's strange in my fate, if I suffer  
from hate

At the hour that I feel it?  
Let the locks of the lightning, all  
bristling and whitening,

Flash, coiling me round,  
While the ether goes surging 'neath  
thunder and scourging  
Of wild winds unbound!

Let the blast of the firmament whirl  
from its place

The earth rooted below,  
And the brine of the ocean, in rapid  
emotion,

Be driven in the face  
Of the stars up in heaven, as they  
walk to and fro!

Let him hurl me anon into Tartarus  
— on —

To the blackest degree,  
With Necessity's vortices strangling  
me down;

But he cannot join death to a fate  
meant for me!

*Hermes.* Why, the words that he  
speaks and the thoughts that  
he thinks

Are maniacal! — add,  
If the Fate who hath bound him  
should loose not the links,

He were utterly mad.  
Then depart ye who groan with  
him,

Leaving to moan with him;  
Go in haste! lest the roar of the  
thunder anearning

Should blast you to idiocy, living and  
hearing.

*Chorus.* Change thy speech for  
another, thy thought for a new,  
If to move me and teach me indeed  
be thy care;

For thy words swerve so far from the  
loyal and true

That the thunder of Zeus seems  
more easy to bear.

How! couldst teach me to venture  
such vileness? behold!

I choose with this victim this an-  
guish foretold!

I recoil from the traitor in haste and  
disdain,

And I know that the curse of the  
treason is worse

Than the pang of the chain.

*Hermes.* Then remember, O nymphs,  
what I tell you before,

Nor, when pierced by the arrows  
that Atë will throw you,

Cast blame on your fate, and declare  
evermore

That Zeus thrust you on anguish he  
did not foreshow you.

Nay, verily, nay! for ye perish anon

For your deed, by your choice. By  
no blindness of doubt,  
No abruptness of doom, but by mad-  
ness alone,

In the great net of Até, whence  
none cometh out,

Ye are wound and undone.

*Prometheus.* Ay! in act now, in  
word now no more,

Earth is rocking in space.

And the thunders crash up with a  
roar upon roar,

And the eddying lightnings flash  
fire in my face,

And the whirlwinds are whirling the  
dust round and round,

And the blasts of the winds univer-  
sal leap free,

And blow each upon each with a pas-  
sion of sound,

And ether goes mingling in storm  
with the sea.

Such a curse on my head, in a mani-  
fest dread,

From the hand of your Zeus has  
been hurtled along.

Oh my mother's fair glory! O Ether,  
enringing

All eyes with the sweet common  
light of thy bringing!

Dost see how I suffer this  
wrong?

## A LAMENT FOR ADONIS.

FROM THE GREEK OF BION.

### I.

I mourn for Adonis — Adonis is dead,  
Fair Adonis is dead, and the Loves  
are lamenting.

Sleep, Cypris, no more on thy purple-  
strewed bed:

Arise, wretch stoled in black, beat  
thy breast unrelenting.

And shriek to the worlds, "Fair  
Adonis is dead."

### II.

I mourn for Adonis — the Loves are  
lamenting.

He lies on the hills in his beauty  
and death:

The white tusk of a boar has trans-  
pierced his white thigh.

Cytherea grows mad at his thin,  
gasping breath.

While the black blood drips down on  
the pale ivory.

And his eyeballs lie quenched with  
the weight of his brows:

The rose fades from his lips, and upon  
them just parted

The kiss dies the goddess consents  
not to lose,

Though the kiss of the dead cannot  
make her glad-hearted:

He knows not who kisses him dead  
in the dews.

### III.

I mourn for Adonis — the Loves are  
lamenting.

Deep, deep, in the thigh is Adonis's  
wound;

But a deeper, is Cypris's bosom pre-  
senting.

The youth lieth dead while his dogs  
howl around,

And the nymphs weep aloud from  
the mists of the hill,

And the poor Aphrodité, with  
tresses unbound,

All dishevelled, unsandalled, shrieks  
mournful and shrill

Through the dusk of the groves.  
The thorns, tearing her feet,

Gather up the red flower of her blood  
which is holy,

Each footstep she takes; and the  
valleys repeat

The sharp cry she utters, and draw it  
out slowly.

She calls on her spouse, her Assyrian, on him  
Her own youth, while the dark blood  
spreads over his body,  
The chest taking hue from the gash  
in the limb,  
And the bosom once ivory turning to  
ruddy.

## iv.

Ah, ah, Cytherea! the Loves are lamenting.  
She lost her fair spouse, and so lost  
her fair smile:  
When he lived she was fair, by the  
whole world's consenting,  
Whose fairness is dead with him:  
woe worth the while!  
All the mountains above, and the oak-  
lands below,  
Murmur, ah, ah, Adonis! the streams  
overflow  
Aphrodite's deep wail; river-fountains  
in pity  
Weep soft in the hills; and the flow-  
ers as they blow  
Redden outward with sorrow, while  
all hear her go  
With the song of her sadness through  
mountain and city.

## v.

Ah, ah, Cytherea! Adonis is  
dead.  
Fair Adonis is dead—Echo an-  
swers Adonis!  
Who weeps not for Cypris, when bow-  
ing her head  
She stares at the wound where it  
gapes and astones?  
—When, ah, ah!—she saw how the  
blood ran away  
And empurpled the thigh, and, with  
wild hands flung out,  
Said with sobs, "Stay, Adonis! un-  
happy one, stay,  
Let me feel thee once more, let me  
ring thee about  
With the clasp of my arms, and press  
kiss into kiss!  
Wait a little, Adonis, and kiss me  
again,  
For the last time, beloved; and but so  
much of this  
That the kiss may learn life from the  
warmth of the strain!  
—Till thy breath shall exude from thy  
soul to my mouth,

To my heart, and, the love-charm I  
once more receiving,  
May drink thy love in it, and keep of  
a truth

That one kiss in the place of Adonis  
the living.

Thou fliest me, mournful one, fliest  
me far,

My Adonis, and seekest the Acheron  
portal,

To Hell's cruel King goest down with  
a scar,

While I weep and live on like a  
wretched immortal.

And follow no step! O Persephoné,  
take him.

My husband! thou'rt better and  
brighter than I,

So all beauty flows down to thee: I  
cannot make him

Look up at my grief: there's despair  
in my cry,

Since I wail for Adonis who died to  
me—died to me—

Then, I fear *thee!* Art thou dead,  
my Adored?

Passion ends like a dream in the sleep  
that's denied to me,

Cypris is widowed, the Loves seek  
their lord

All the house through in vain. Charm  
of cestus has ceased

With thy clasp! O too bold in the  
hunt past preventing,

Ay, mad, thou so fair, to have strife  
with a beast!"

Thus the goddess wailed on; and  
the Loves are lamenting.

## vi.

Ah, ah, Cytherea! Adonis is  
dead.

She wept tear after tear with the blood  
which was shed,

And both turned into flowers for the  
earth's garden-close,—

Her tear, to the wind-flower; his  
blood to the rose.

## vii.

I mourn for Adonis—Adonis is  
dead.

Weep no more in the woods, Cythe-  
rea, thy lover!

So, well: make a place for his corse in  
thy bed,

With the purples thou sleepest in,  
under and over.

He's fair, though a corse,— a fair corse,  
like a sleeper.

Lay him soft in the silks he had  
pleasure to fold

When, beside thee at night, holy  
dreams deep and deeper

Enclosed his young life on the couch  
made of gold.

Love him still, poor Adonis; cast on  
him together

The crowns and the flowers: since  
he died from the place,

Why, let all die with him; let the  
blossoms go wither;

Rain myrtles and olive-buds down  
on his face.

Rain the myrrh down, let all that is  
best fall a-pining

Since the myrrh of his life from thy  
keeping is swept.

Pale he lay, thine Adonis, in purples  
reclining:

The Loves raised their voices around  
him and wept.

They have shorn their bright curls off  
to cast on Adonis:

One treads on his bow; on his arrows,  
another;

One breaks up a well-feathered quiv-  
er; and one is

Bent low at a sandal, untying the  
strings;

And one carries the vases of gold  
from the springs,

While one washes the wound, and be-  
hind them a brother

Fans down on the body sweet air  
with his wings.

## VIII.

Cytherea herself now the Loves are  
lamenting,

Each toreh at the door Hymenæus  
blew out;

And, the marriage-wreath dropping  
its leaves as repenting,

No more "Hymen, Hymen," is  
chanted about;

But the *ai ai* instead — "ai alas" is  
begun

For Adonis, and then follows "ai  
Hymenæus!"

The Graces are weeping for Cinyris'  
son,

Sobbing low, each to each "His fair  
eyes cannot see us!"

Their wail strikes more shrill than the  
sadder Dioné's.

The Fates mourn aloud for Adonis,  
Adonis,

Deep chanting: he hears not a word  
that they say:

He *would* hear, but Persephoné has  
him in keeping.

—Cease moan, Cytherea! leave pomps  
for to-day,

And weep new when a new year re-  
fits thee for weeping.

## A VISION OF POETS.

O sacred Essence, lighting me this hour,  
How may I lightly stifle thy great  
power?

*Echo.* Power.

Power! but of whence? under the green-  
wood sprays?

Or liv'st in Heaven? saye.

*Echo.* In Heavens aye.

In Heavens aye! tell, may I it obtayne  
By alms, by fasting, prayer, — by paine?

*Echo.* By paine.

Show me the paine, it shall be under-  
gone:

I to mine end will still go on.

*Echo.* Go on.

BRITANNIA'S PASTORALS.

A POET could not sleep aright,  
For his soul kept up too much  
light  
Under his eyelids for the night.

And thus he rose disquieted,  
With sweet rhymes ringing through  
his head,  
And in the forest wanderèd,

Where, sloping up the darkest glades,  
The moon had drawn long colonnades  
Upon whose floor the verdure fades

To a faint silver, pavement fair  
The antique wood-nymphs scarce  
would dare  
To footprint o'er, had such been there,

And rather sit by breathlessly,  
With fear in their large eyes, to see  
The consecrated sight. But ne

The poet, who, with spirit-kiss  
Familiar, had long claimed for his  
Whatever earthly beauty is,

Who also in his spirit bore  
A beauty passing the earth's store,  
Walked calmly onward evermore.

His aimless thoughts in metre went  
Like a babe's hand, without intent,  
Drawn down a seven-stringed instru-  
ment;

Nor jarred it with his humor as,  
With a faint stirring of the grass,  
An apparition fair did pass.

He might have feared another time;  
But all things fair and strange did  
chime  
With his thoughts then, as rhyme to  
rhyme.

An angel had not startled him,  
Alighted from heaven's burning rim  
To breathe from glory in the Dim;

Much less a lady riding slow  
Upon a palfrey white as snow,  
And smooth as a snow-cloud could go.

Full upon his she turned her face:  
"What ho, sir poet! dost thou pace  
Our woods at night in ghostly chase

"Of some fair dryad of old tales,  
Who chants between the nightingales  
And over sleep by song prevails?"

She smiled; but he could see arise  
Her soul from far adown her eyes,  
Prepared as if for sacrifice.

She looked a queen who seemeth gay  
From royal grace alone. "Now, nay,"  
He answered, "slumber passed away

"Compelled by instincts in my head  
That I should see to-night, instead  
Of a fair nymph, some fairer Dread."

She looked up quickly to the sky  
And spake: "The moon's regality  
Will hear no praise; she is as I.

"She is in heaven, and I on earth;  
This is my kingdom: I come forth  
To crown all poets to their worth."

He brake in with a voice that  
mourned:

"To their worth, lady? They are  
scorned

By men they sing for, till injured.

"To their worth? Beauty in the  
mind

Leaves the hearth cold, and love-re-  
fined

Ambitions make the world unkind.

"The boor who ploughs the daisy  
down,

The chief whose mortgage of renown  
Fixed upon graves has bought a  
crown —

"Both these are happier, more ap-  
proved,  
Than poets! — why should I be moved  
In saying both are more beloved?"

"The south can judge not of the  
north,"

She resumed calmly: "I come forth  
To crown all poets to their worth.

"Yea, verily, to anoint them all  
With blessed oils, which surely shall  
Smell sweeter as the ages fall."

"As sweet," the poet said, and rung  
A low sad laugh, "as flowers are,  
sprung  
Out of their graves when they die  
young;

"As sweet as window-eglantine,  
Some bough of which, as they de-  
cline,

The hired nurse gathers at their sign;

"As sweet, in short, as perfumed  
shroud

Which the gay Roman maidens sewed  
For English Keats, singing aloud."

The lady answered, "Yea, as sweet!  
The things thou namest being complete  
In fragrance, as I measure it.

"Since sweet the death-clothes and  
the knell  
Of him who, having lived, dies well;  
And wholly sweet the asphodel

"Stirred softly by that foot of his,  
When he treads brave on all that is,  
Into the world of souls, from this.

"Since sweet the tears dropped at  
the door  
Of tearless death, and even before—  
Sweet, consecrated evermore.

"What, dost thou judge it a strange  
thing  
That poets, crowned for vanquishing,  
Should bear some dust from out the  
ring?"

"Come on with me, come on with me,  
And learn in coming: let me free  
Thy spirit into verity."

She ceased: her palfrey's paces sent  
No separate noises as she went:  
'Twas a bee's hum, a little spent.

And, while the poet seemed to tread  
Along the drowsy noise so made,  
The forest heaved up overhead

Its billowy foliage through the air,  
And the calm stars did far and spare  
O'erswim the masses everywhere,

Save when the overtopping pines  
Did bar their tremulous light with  
lines  
All fixed and black. Now the moon  
shines

A broader glory. You may see  
The trees grow rarer presently;  
The air blows up more fresh and free:

Until they come from dark to light,  
And from the forest to the sight  
Of the large heaven-heart, bare with  
night,

A fiery throb in every star,  
Those burning arteries that are  
The conduits of God's life afar.

A wild brown moorland underneath,  
And four pools breaking up the heath  
With white low gleamings blank as  
death.

Beside the first pool, near the wood,  
A dead tree in set horror stood,  
Peeled and disjointed, stark as rood:

Since thunder-stricken years ago,  
Fixed in the spectral strain and throe  
Wherewith it struggled from the  
blow:

A monumental tree, alone,  
That will not bend in storms, nor  
groan,  
But break off sudden like a stone.

Its lifeless shadow lies oblique  
Upon the pool where, javelin-like,  
The star-rays quiver while they strike.

"Drink," said the lady, very still:  
"Be holy and cold." He did her  
will,  
And drank the starry water chill.

The next pool they came near unto  
Was bare of trees: there, only grew  
Straight flags, and lilies just a few,

Which sullen on the water sate,  
And leant their faces on the flat,  
As weary of the starlight-state.

"Drink," said the lady, grave and  
slow:  
"World's use behooveth thee to  
know."  
He drank the bitter wave below.

The third pool, girt with thorny  
bushes,  
And flaunting weeds and reeds and  
rushes  
That winds sang through in mournful  
gushes,

Was whitely smeared in many a  
round  
By a slow slime: the starlight swound  
Over the ghastly light it found.

"Drink," said the lady, sad and  
slow:  
"World's love behooveth thee to  
know."  
He looked to her commanding so;

Her brow was troubled; but her eye  
Struck clear to his soul. For all  
reply  
He drank the water suddenly,

Then, with a deathly sickness, passed  
Beside the fourth pool and the last,  
Where weights of shadow were down-  
cast

From yew and alder, and rank trails  
Of nightshade clasping the trunk-  
scales,  
And flung across the intervals

From yew to yew: who dares to stoop  
Where those dank branches over-  
droop,  
Into his heart the chill strikes up,

He hears a silent gliding coil,  
The snakes strain hard against the  
soil,  
His foot slips in their slimy oil,

And toads seem crawling on his hand,  
And clinging bats, but dimly scanned,  
Full in his face their wings expand.

A paleness took the poet's cheek:  
"Must I drink *here*?" he seemed to  
seek  
The lady's will with utterance meek:

"Ay, ay," she said, "it so must be:"  
(And this time she spake cheerfully)  
"Behooves thee know *world's cruel-  
ty*."

He bowed his forehead till his mouth  
Curved in the wave, and drank un-  
loath  
As if from rivers of the south;

His lips sobbed through the water  
rank,  
His heart paused in him while he  
drank,  
His brain beat heart-like, rose and  
sank,

And he swooned backward to a dream  
Wherein he lay 'twixt gloom and  
gleam,  
With death and life at each extreme:

And spiritual thunders, born of soul,  
Not cloud, did leap from mystic pole,  
And o'er him roll and counter-roll,

Crushing their echoes reboant  
With their own wheels. Did Heaven  
so grant  
His spirit a sign of covenant?

At last came silence. A slow kiss  
Did crown his forehead after this;  
His eyelids flew back for the bliss.

The lady stood beside his head,  
Smiling a thought with hair disspread:  
The moonshine seemed dishevelled

In her sleek tresses manifold,  
Like Danae's in the rain of old  
That dripped with melancholy gold:

But SHE was holy, pale and high  
As one who saw an ecstasy  
Beyond a foretold agony.

"Rise up!" said she with voice where  
song  
Eddied through speech, — "rise up, be  
strong;  
And learn how right avenges wrong."

The poet rose up on his feet:  
He stood before an altar set  
For sacrament with vessels meet,

And mystic altar-lights, which shine  
As if their flames were crystal-  
line  
Carved flames that would not shrink  
or pine.

The altar filled the central place  
Of a great church, and toward its  
face  
Long aisles did shoot and interlace,

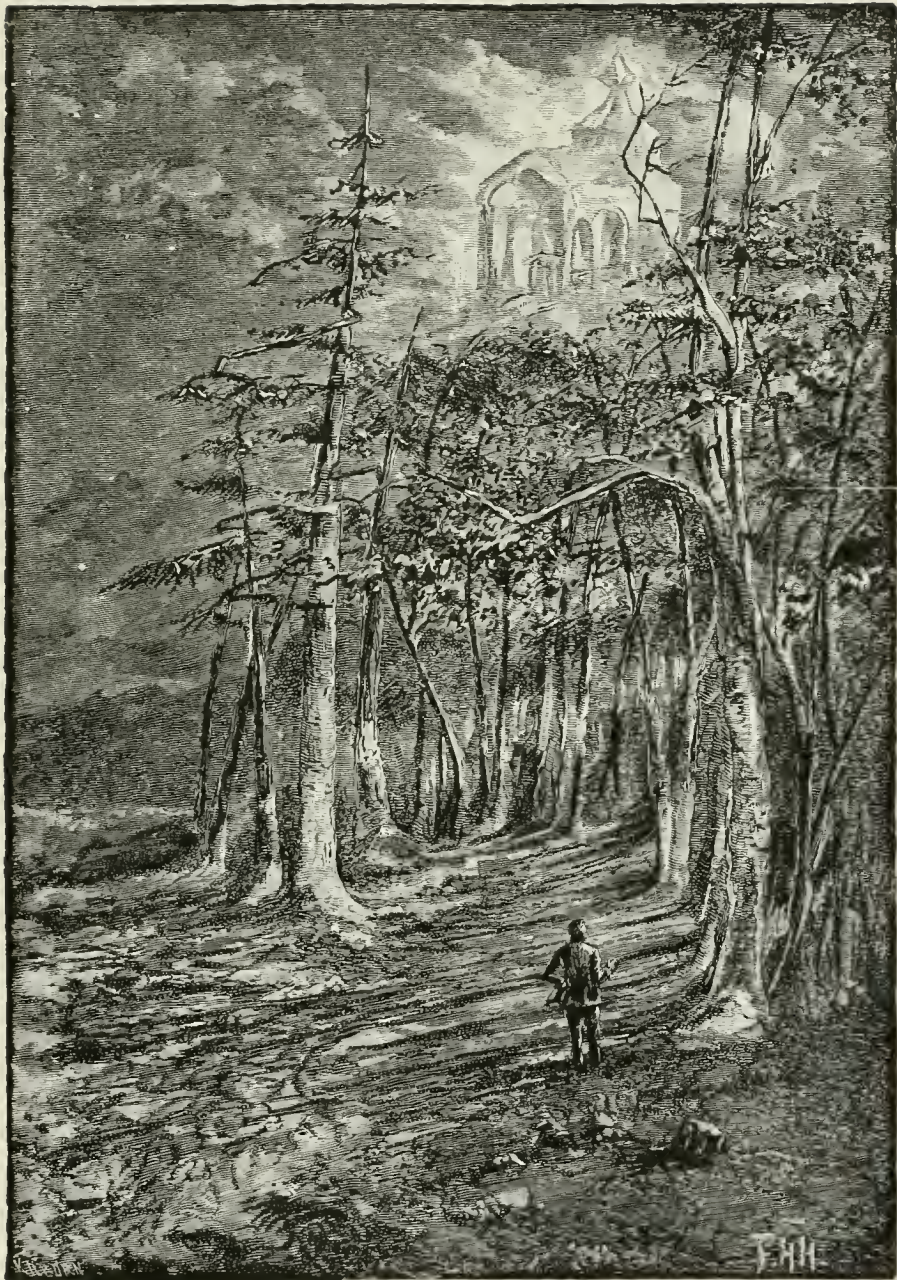
And from it a continuous mist  
Of incense (round the edges kissed  
By a yellow light of amethyst)

Wound upward slowly and throb-  
bly,  
Cloud within cloud, right silverly,  
Cloud above cloud, victoriously, —

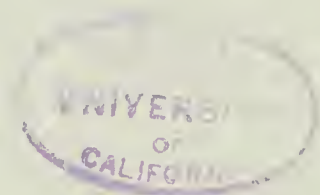
Broke full against the archèd roof,  
And thence refracting eddied off,  
And floated through the marble woof

Of many a fine-wrought architrave,  
Then, poisoning its white masses brave,  
Swept solemnly down aisle and  
nave,





“ Alone amid the shifting scene  
That central altar stood serene.” — Page 251.



Where now in dark, and now in light,  
The countless columns, glimmering  
white,  
Seemed leading out to the Infinite:

Plunged halfway up the shaft they  
showed,  
In that pale shifting incense-cloud  
Which flowed them by, and over-  
flowed,

Till mist and marble seemed to blend  
And the whole temple at the end,  
With its own incense to distend, —

The arches like a giant's bow  
To bend and slacken; and, below,  
The niched saints to come and go:

Alone amid the shifting scene  
That central altar stood serene  
In its clear, steadfast taper-sheen.

Then first the poet was aware  
Of a chief angel standing there  
Before that altar, in the glare.

His eyes were dreadful, for you saw  
That *they* saw God; his lips and jaw,  
Grand-made and strong, as Sinai's law

They could enunciate, and refrain  
From vibratory after-pain;  
And his brow's height was sovereign:

On the vast background of his wings  
Rises his image, and he flings  
From each plumed arc pale glitterings

And fiery flakes (as beateth more  
Or less the angel-heart) before  
And round him upon roof and floor,

Edging with fire the shifting fumes;  
While at his side, 'twixt lights and  
glooms,  
The phantasm of an organ booms.

Extending from which instrument  
And angel, right and left way bent,  
The poet's sight grew sentient

Of a strange company around  
And toward the altar; pale and bound,  
With bay above the eyes profound.

Deathful their faces were, and yet  
The power of life was in them set,  
Never forgot, nor to forget:

Sublime significance of mouth,  
Dilated nostril full of youth,  
And forehead royal with the truth.

These faces were not multiplied  
Beyond your count, but, side by side,  
Did front the altar, glorified,

Still as a vision, yet exprest  
Full as an action, — look and geste  
Of buried saint in risen rest.

The poet knew them. Faint and dim  
His spirits seemed to sink in him;  
Then, like a dolphin, change, and  
swim

The current: these were poets true,  
Who died for Beauty, as martyrs do  
For Truth; the ends being scarcely  
two.

God's prophets of the Beautiful  
These poets were; of iron rule,  
The rugged cilix, serge of wool.

Here Homer, with the broad suspense  
Of thunderous brows, and lips intense  
Of garrulous god-innocence.

There Shakspeare, on whose forehead  
climb  
The crowns o' the world: O eyes sub-  
lime  
With tears and laughters for all time!

Here Æschylus, the women swooned  
To see so awful when he frowned  
As the gods did: he standeth crowned.

Enripides, with close and mild  
Scholastic lips, that could be wild,  
And laugh or sob out like a child,

Even in the classes. Sophocles,  
With that king's look which down the  
trees  
Followed the dark effigies

Of the lost Theban. Hesiod old,  
Who, somewhat blind and deaf and  
cold,  
Cared most for gods and bulls. And  
bold

Electric Pindar, quick as fear,  
With race-dust on his cheeks, and  
clear,  
Slant, startled eyes that seem to hear

The chariot rounding the last goal,  
To hurtle past it in his soul.  
And Sappho, with that gloriole

Of ebon hair on calmèd brows —  
O poet-woman! none foregoes  
The leap, attaining the repose.

Theocritus, with glittering locks  
Dropt sideway, as betwixt the rocks  
He watched the visionary flocks.

And Aristophanes, who took  
The world with mirth, and laughter-  
struck  
The hollow caves of Thought, and  
woke

The infinite echoes hid in each.  
And Virgil: shade of Mantuan beech  
Did help the shade of bay to reach

And knit around his forehead high;  
For his gods wore less majesty  
Than his brown bees hummed death-  
lessly.

Lucretius, nobler than his mood,  
Who dropped his plummet down the  
broad,  
Deep universe, and said "No God,"

Finding no bottom: he denied  
Divinely the divine, and died  
Chief poet on the Tiber-side

By grace of God: his face is stern  
As one compelled, in spite of scorn,  
To teach a truth he would not learn.

And Ossian, dimly seen or guessed;  
Once counted greater than the rest,  
When mountain-winds blew out his  
vest.

And Spenser drooped his dreaming  
head  
(With languid sleep-smile, you had  
said,  
From his own verse engenderèd)

On Ariosto's, till they ran  
Their curls in one: the Italian  
Shot nimbler heat of bolder man

From his fine lids. And Dante,  
stern  
And sweet, whose spirit was an urn  
For wine and milk poured out in turn.

Hard-souled Alfieri: and fancy-willed  
Boiardo, who with laughter filled  
The pauses of the jostled shield.

And Berni, with a hand stretched out  
To sleek that storm. And, not with-  
out  
The wreath he died in, and the doubt

He died by, Tasso, bard and lover,  
Whose visions were too thin to cover  
The face of a false woman over.

And soft Ræine; and grave Corneille,  
The orator of rhymes, whose wail  
Scarcè shook his purple. And Pe-  
trarch pale,

From whose brain-lighted heart were  
thrown  
A thousand thoughts beneath the sun,  
Each lucid with the name of One.

And Camoens, with that look he had,  
Compelling India's Genius sad  
From the wave through the Lusiad;

The murmurs of the storm-cape ocean  
Indrawn in vibrative emotion  
Along the verse. And, while devotion

In his wild eyes fantastic shone  
Under the tonsure blown upon  
By airs celestial, Calderon.

And bold De Vega, who breathed  
quick  
Verse after verse, till death's old trick  
Put pause to life and rhetoric.

And Goethe, with that reaching eye  
His soul reached out from, far and  
high,  
And fell from inner entity.

And Schiller, with heroic front  
Worthy of Plutarch's kiss upon't, —  
Too large for wreath of modern wont.

And Chaucer, with his infantine  
Familiar clasp of things divine:  
That mark upon his lip is wine.

Here Milton's eyes strike piercing-  
dim:  
The shapes of suns and stars did  
swim  
Like clouds from them, and granted  
him

God for sole vision. Cowley, there,  
Whose active fancy debonair  
Drew straws like amber — foul to fair.

Drayton and Browne, with smiles  
they drew  
From outward nature, still kept new  
From their own inward nature true.

And Marlowe, Webster, Fletcher,  
Ben,  
Whose fire-hearts sowed our furrows  
when  
The world was worthy of such men.

And Burns, with pungent passionings  
Set in his eyes: deep lyric springs  
Are of the fire-mount's issuings.

And Shelley, in his white ideal,  
All statue-blind. And Keats, the real  
Adonis with the hymeneal

Fresh vernal buds half sunk between  
His youthful curls, kissed straight  
and sheen  
In his Rome-grave by Venus queen.

And poor, proud Byron, sad as grave,  
And salt as life; forlornly brave,  
And quivering with the dart he drave.

And visionary Coleridge, who  
Did sweep his thoughts as angels do  
Their wings with cadence up the Blue.

These poets faced (and many more)  
The lighted altar looming o'er  
The clouds of incense dim and hoar;

And all their faces, in the lull  
Of natural things, looked wonderful  
With life and death and deathless  
rule.

All, still as stone, and yet intense,  
As if by spirit's vehemence  
That stone were carved, and not by  
sense.

But where the heart of each should  
beat,  
There seemed a wound instead of it,  
From whence the blood dropped to  
their feet

Drop after drop, — dropped heavily  
As century follows century  
Into the deep eternity.

Then said the lady, — and her word  
Came distant, as wide waves were  
stirred  
Between her and the ear that heard, —

“*World's use* is cold; *world's love* is  
vain;  
*World's cruelty* is bitter bane:  
But pain is not the fruit of pain.

“Harken, O poet, whom I led  
From the dark wood! dismissing  
dread,  
Now hear this angel in my stead.

“His organ's clavier strikes along  
These poets' hearts, sonorous, strong,  
They gave him without count of  
wrong, —

“A diapason whence to guide  
Up to God's feet, from these who  
died,  
An anthem fully glorified,

“Whereat God's blessing, IBARAK  
(יְבָרַךְ)  
Breathes back this music, folds it  
back  
About the earth in vapory raeck,

“And men walk in it, crying,  
'Lo  
The world is wider, and we know  
The very heavens look brighter  
so;

“The stars move statelier round the  
edge  
Of the silver spheres, and give in  
pledge  
Their light for nobler privilege;

“No little flower but joys or grieves;  
Full life is rustling in the sheaves;  
Full spirit sweeps the forest-leaves.'

“So works this music on the earth;  
God so admits it, sends it forth  
To add another worth to worth, —

“A new creation-bloom, that rounds  
The old creation, and expounds  
His Beautiful in tuneful sounds.

“Now harken!” Then the poet  
gazed  
Upon the angel, glorious-faced,  
Whose hand, majestically raised,

Floated across the organ-keys,  
Like a pale moon o'er murmuring seas,  
With no touch but with influences:

Then rose and fell (with swell and  
swoond  
Of shapeless noises wandering round  
A concord which at last they found)

Those mystic keys: the tones were  
mixt,  
Dim, faint, and thrilled and throbb'd  
betwixt  
The incomplete and the unfixt;

And therein mighty minds were  
heard  
In mighty musings, inly stirred,  
And struggling outward for a word,

Until these surges, having run  
This way and that, gave out as one  
An Aphrodite of sweet tune,

A harmony, that, finding vent,  
Upward in grand ascension went,  
Winged to a heavenly argument, —

Up, upward like a saint who strips  
The shroud back from his eyes and  
lips,  
And rises in apocalypse;

A harmony sublime and plain,  
Which cleft (as flying swan, the rain,  
Throwing the drops off with a strain

Of her white wing) those undertones  
Of perplex chords, and soared at  
once,  
And struck out from the starry  
thrones

Their several silver octaves as  
It passed to God. The music was  
Of divine stature, strong to pass;

And those who heard it understood  
Something of life in spirit and blood,  
Something of Nature's fair and good.

And while it sounded, those great  
souls  
Did thrill as racers at the goals,  
And burn in all their aureoles;

But she the lady, as vapor-bound,  
Stood calmly in the joy of sound,  
Like Nature, with the showers around;

And when it ceased, the blood which  
fell  
Again, alone grew audible,  
Tolling the silence as a bell.

The sovran angel lifted high  
His hand, and spake out sovranly:  
"Tried poets, hearken and reply!

"Give me true answers. If we  
grant  
That not to suffer is to want  
The conscience of the jubilant;

"If ignorance of anguish is  
*But* ignorance, and mortals miss  
Far prospects by a level bliss;

"If, as two colors must be viewed  
In a visible image, mortals should  
Need good and evil to see good;

"If to speak nobly comprehends  
To feel profoundly; if the ends  
Of power and suffering, Nature  
blends;

"If poets on the tripod must  
Write like the Pythian to make just  
Their oracles, and merit trust;

"If every vatic word that sweeps  
To change the world must pale their  
lips,  
And leave their own souls in eclipse;

"If to search deep the universe  
Must pierce the searcher with the  
curse,  
Because that bolt (in man's reverse)

"Was shot to the heart o' the wood,  
and lies  
Wedged deepest in the best; if eyes  
That look for visions and surprise

"From influent angels must shut  
down  
Their eyelids first to sun and moon,  
The head asleep upon a stone;

"If ONE who did redeem you back,  
By his own loss, from final wrack,  
Did consecrate by touch and track

"Those temporal sorrows till the  
taste  
Of brackish waters of the waste  
Is salt with tears he dropt too fast;

"If all the crowns of earth must wound  
With prickings of the thorns he found;  
If saddest sighs swell sweetest sound, —

"What say ye unto this? Refuse  
This baptism in salt water? Choose  
Calm breasts, mute lips, and labor loose?

"Or, O ye gifted givers! ye  
Who give your liberal hearts to me  
To make the world this harmony,

"Are ye resigned that they be spent  
To such world's help?"

The spirits bent  
Their awful brows, and said, "Content."

Content! it sounded like *Amen*  
Said by a choir of mourning men;  
An affirmation full of pain

And patience; ay, of glorying  
And adoration, as a king  
Might seal an oath for governing.

Then said the angel, — and his face  
Lightened abroad until the place  
Grew larger for a moment's space,

The long aisles flashing out in light,  
And nave and transept, columns white  
And arches crossed, being clear to sight

As if the roof were off, and all  
Stood in the noon-sun, — "Lo! I  
call  
To other hearts as liberal.

"This pedal strikes out in the air:  
My instrument has room to bear  
Still fuller strains and perfecter.

"Herein is room, and shall be room  
While time lasts, for new hearts to  
come  
Consummating while they consume.

"What living man will bring a  
gift  
Of his own heart, and help to lift  
The tune? The race is to the  
swift."

So asked the angel. Straight, the  
while,  
A company came up the aisle  
With measured step and sorted smile;

Cleaving the incense-clouds that  
rise,  
With winking, unaccustomed eyes,  
And lovelocks smelling sweet of spice.

One bore his head above the rest  
As if the world were dispossessed;  
And one did pillow chin on breast,

Right languid, an as he should faint;  
One shook his curls across his paint,  
And moralized on worldly taint;

One, slanting up his face, did wink  
The salt rheum to the eyelid's brink,  
To think, O gods! or — not to think.

Some trod out stealthily and slow,  
As if the sun would fall in snow  
If they walked to instead of fro;

And some, with conscious ambling  
free,  
Did shake their bells right daintily  
On hand and foot, for harmony;

And some, composing sudden sighs  
In attitudes of point-device,  
Rehearsed impromptu agonies.

And when this company drew near  
The spirits crowned, it might appear  
Submitted to a ghastly fear;

As a sane eye in master-passion  
Constrains a maniac to the fashion  
Of hideous maniac imitation

In the least geste, — the dropping low  
O' the lid, the wrinkling of the brow,  
Exaggerate with mock and mow:

So mastered was that company  
By the crowned vision utterly,  
Swayed to a maniac mockery.

One dulled his eyeballs, as they ached  
With Homer's forehead, though he  
lacked

An inch of any; and one racked

His lower lip with restless tooth,  
As Pindar's rushing words forsooth  
Were pent behind it; one his smooth

Pink cheeks did rumple passionate  
Like Æschylus, and tried to prate  
On trolling tongue of fate and fate;

One set her eyes like Sappho's — or  
Any light woman's; one forbore  
Like Dante, or any man as poor

In mirth, to let a smile undo  
His hard-shut lips; and one that drew  
Sour humors from his mother blew

His sunken cheeks out to the size  
Of most unnatural jollities,  
Because Anacreon looked jest-wise;

So with the rest: it was a sight  
A great world-laughter would requite,  
Or great world-wrath, with equal  
right.

Out came a speaker from that crowd  
To speak for all, in sleek and prond  
Exordial periods, while he bowed

His knee before the angel: "Thus,  
O angel who hast called for us,  
We bring thee service emulous, —

"Fit service from sufficient soul,  
Hand-service to receive world's dole,  
Lip-service in world's ear to roll

"Adjusted concords soft enow  
To hear the wine-cups passing  
through,  
And not too grave to spoil the show:

"Thou, certes, when thou askest  
more,  
O sapient angel! leanest o'er  
The window-sill of metaphor.

"To give our hearts up? Fie! that  
rage  
Barbaric antedates the age:  
It is not done on any stage.

"Because your seald or gleeman went  
With seven or nine stringed instrument  
Upon his back, — must ours be bent?

"We are not pilgrims, by your leave;  
No, nor yet martyrs: if we grieve,  
It is to rhyme to — summer eve:

"And if we labor, it shall be  
As suiteth best with our degree,  
In after-dinner revery."

More yet that speaker would have  
said,  
Poising between his smiles fair-fed  
Each separate phrase till finished;

But all the foreheads of those born  
And dead true poets flashed with  
seorn  
Betwixt the bay-leaves round them  
worn;

Ay, jettted such brave fire, that they,  
The new-come, shrank and paled  
away  
Like leaden ashes when the day

Strikes on the hearth. A spirit-blast,  
A presenee known by power, at last  
Took them up mutely: they had  
passed.

And he, our pilgrim poet, saw  
Only their places in deep awe,  
What time the angel's smile did  
draw

His gazing upward. Smiling on,  
The angel in the angel shone,  
Revealing glory in benison:

Till, ripened in the light which shnt  
The poet in, his spirit mute  
Dropped sudden as a perfect fruit:

He fell before the angel's feet,  
Saying, "If what is true is sweet,  
In something I may compass it:

"For, where my worthiness is poor,  
My will stands richly at the door  
To pay shortcomings evermore.

"Accept me, therefore: not for price,  
And not for pride, my sacrifice  
Is tendered; for my soul is nice,

"And will beat down those dusty  
seeds  
Of bearded corn if she sneeeds  
In soaring while the covey feeds.

"I soar; I am drawn up like the lark  
To its white cloud: so high my mark,  
Albeit my wing is small and dark.

"I ask no wages, seek no fame:  
Sew me for shroud, round face and  
name,  
God's banner of the oriflamme.



" I only would have leave to loose  
(In tears and blood if so He choose)  
Mine inward music out to use;

" I only would be spent — in pain  
And loss perchance, but not in vain —  
Upon the sweetness of that strain;

" Only project beyond the bound  
Of mine own life, so lost and found,  
My voice, and live on in its sound;

" Only embrace and be embraced  
By fiery ends, whereby to waste,  
And light God's future with my  
past."

The angel's smile grew more divine,  
The mortal speaking; ay, its shine  
Swelled fuller, like a choir-note fine,

Till the broad glory round his brow  
Did vibrate with the light below;  
But what he said, I do not know.

Nor know I if the man who prayed  
Rose up accepted, unforbade,  
From the church-floor where he was  
laid;

Nor if a listening life did run  
Through the king-poets, one by one  
Rejoicing in a worthy son:

My soul, which might have seen, grew  
blind  
By what it looked on: I can find  
No certain count of things behind.

I saw alone, dim white and grand  
As in a dream, the angel's hand  
Stretched forth in gesture of command

Straight through the haze. And so,  
as erst,

A strain more noble than the first  
Mused in the organ, and outburst:

With giant march from floor to roof  
Rose the full notes now parted off  
In pauses massively aloof

Like measured thunders, now rejoined  
In concords of mysterious kind  
Which fused together sense and mind,

Now flashing sharp on sharp along,  
Exultant in a mounting throng,  
Now dying off to a low song

Fed upon minors, wavelike sounds  
Re-eddying into silver rounds,  
Enlarging liberty with bounds:

And every rhythm that seemed to  
close  
Survived in confluent underflows  
Symphonious with the next that rose.

Thus the whole strain being multi-  
plied  
And greatened, with its glorified  
Wings shot abroad from side to side,

Waved backward (as a wind might  
wave  
A Brocken mist, and with as brave  
Wild roaring) arch and architrave.

Aisle, transept, column, marble wall,  
Then swelling outward, prodigal  
Of aspiration beyond thrall,

Soared, and drew up with it the whole  
Of this said vision, as a soul  
Is raised by a thought. And as a  
scroll

Of bright devices is unrolled  
Still upward with a gradual gold,  
So rose the vision manifold,

Angel and organ, and the round  
Of spirits, solemnized and crowned;  
While the freed clouds of incense  
wound

Ascending, following in their track,  
And glimmering faintly like the rack  
O' the moon in her own light cast  
back.

And as that solemn dream withdrew,  
The lady's kiss did fall anew  
Cold on the poet's brow as dew.

And that same kiss which bound him  
first  
Beyond the senses, now reversed  
Its own law, and most subtly pierced

His spirit with the sense of things  
Sensual and present. Vanishings  
Of glory with Æolian wings

Struck him and passed: the lady's  
face  
Did melt back in the chrysopras  
Of the orient morning sky, that was

Yet clear of lark; and there and so  
She melted as a star might do,  
Still smiling as she melted slow, —

Smiling so slow, he seemed to see  
Her smile the last thing, gloriously  
Beyond her, far as memory.

Then he looked round: he was alone.  
He lay before the breaking sun,  
As Jacob at the Bethel stone.

And thought's entangled skein being  
wound,  
He knew the moorland of his swound,  
And the pale pools that smeared the  
ground;

The far wood-pines like offing ships;  
The fourth pool's yew anear him drips,  
*World's cruelty* attaints his lips,

And still he tastes it, bitter still:  
Through all that glorious possible  
He had the sight of present ill.

Yet rising calmly up and slowly,  
With such a cheer as scorneth folly,  
A mild, delightful melancholy,

He journeyed homeward through the  
wood,  
And prayed along the solitude  
Betwixt the pines, "O God, my God!"

The golden morning's open flowings  
Did sway the trees to murmurous  
bowings,  
In metric chant of blessed poems.

And passing homeward through the  
wood,  
He prayed along the solitude,  
"Thou, Poet-God, art great and good!"

"And though we must have, and have  
had  
Right reason to be earthly sad,  
Thou, Poet-God, art great and glad!"

#### CONCLUSION.

Life treads on life, and heart on heart:  
We press too close in church and mart  
To keep a dream or grave apart.

And I was 'ware of walking down  
That same green forest, where had gone  
The poet-pilgrim. One by one

I traced his footsteps. From the east  
A red and tender radiance pressed  
Through the near trees, until I guessed

The sun behind shone full and round;  
While up the leafiness profound  
A wind scarce old enough for sound

Stood ready to blow on me when  
I turned that way; and now and then  
The birds sang, and brake off again

To shake their pretty feathers dry  
Of the dew, sliding droppingly  
From the leaf-edges, and apply

Back to their song: 'twixt dew and  
bird

So sweet a silence ministered,  
God seemed to use it for a word;

Yet morning souls did leap and run  
In all things, as the least had won  
A joyous insight of the sun,

And no one, looking round the wood,  
Could help confessing as he stood,  
*This Poet-God is glad and good.*

But hark! a distant sound that grows,  
A heaving, sinking of the boughs,  
A rustling murmur, not of those,

A breezy noise which is not breeze!  
And white-clad children by degrees  
Steal out in troops among the trees, —

Fair little children morning-bright,  
With faces grave, yet soft to sight,  
Expressive of restrained delight.

Some plucked the palm-boughs within  
reach,  
And others leapt up high to catch  
The upper boughs, and shake from  
each

A rain of dew, till, wetted so,  
The child who held the branch let go,  
And it swang backward with a flow

Of faster drippings. Then I knew  
The children laughed; but the laugh  
flew  
From its own chirrup as might do

A frightened song-bird; and a child  
Who seemed the chief said very mild,  
"Hush! keep this morning undefiled."

His eyes rebuked them from calm  
spheres;  
His soul upon his brow appears  
In waiting for more holy years.

I called the child to me, and said,  
"What are your palms for?" — "To  
be spread,"  
He answered, "on a poet dead.

"The poet died last month, and now  
The world, which had been some-  
what slow  
In honoring his living brow,

"Commands the palms: they must  
be strown  
On his new marble very soon,  
In a procession of the town."

I sighed and said, "Did he foresee  
Any such honor?" — "Verily  
I cannot tell you," answered he.

"But this I know, I fain would lay  
My own head down, another day,  
As *he* did — with the fame away.

"A lily a friend's hand had plucked  
Lay by his death-bed, which he looked  
As deep down as a bee had sucked,

"Then, turning to the lattice, gazed  
O'er hill and river, and upraised  
His eyes illumined, and amazed

"With the world's beauty, up to God,  
Re-offering on their iris broad  
The images of things bestowed

"By the chief Poet. 'God,' he cried,  
'Be praised for anguish which has  
tried,  
For beauty which has satisfied;

"For this world's presence half  
within  
And half without me, — thought and  
scene, —  
This sense of Being and Having Been.

"I thank thee that my soul hath room  
For thy grand world: both guests  
may come —  
Beauty, to soul; body, to tomb.

"I am content to be so weak:  
Put strength into the words I speak,  
And I am strong in what I seek.

"I am content to be so bare  
Before the archers, everywhere  
My wounds being stroked by heav-  
enly air.

"I laid my soul before thy feet,  
That images of fair and sweet  
Should walk to other men on it.

"I am content to feel the step  
Of each pure image: let those keep  
To mandragore who care to sleep.

"I am content to touch the brink  
Of the other goblet, and I think  
My bitter drink a wholesome drink.

"Because my portion was assigned  
Wholesome and bitter, thou art kind,  
And I am blessed to my mind.

"Gifted for giving, I receive  
The maythorn, and its scent outgive:  
I grieve not that I once did grieve.

"In my large joy of sight and touch  
Beyond what others count for such,  
I am content to suffer much.

"*I know* — is all the mourner saith,  
Knowledge by suffering entereth,  
And life is perfected by death."

The child spake nobly: strange to hear,  
His infantine soft accents clear,  
Charged with high meanings did ap-  
pear;

And, fair to see, his form and face  
Winged out with whiteness and pure  
grace  
From the green darkness of the place.

Behind his head a palm-tree grew;  
An orient beam which pierced it  
through  
Transversely on his forehead drew

The figure of a palm-branch brown,  
Traced on its brightness up and down  
In fine fair lines, — a shadow-crown:

Guido might paint his angels so, —  
A little angel taught to go  
With holy words to saints below, —

Such innocence of action, yet  
Significance of object, met  
In his whole bearing strong and sweet.

And all the children, the whole band,  
Did round in rosy reverence stand,  
Each with a palm-bough in his hand.

"And so he died," I whispered.  
"Nay,  
Not so," the childish voice did say:  
"That poet turned him first to pray

"In silence, and God heard the rest  
'Twixt the sun's footsteps down the  
west.  
Then he called one who loved him  
best.

"Yea, he called softly through the  
room  
(His voice was weak, yet tender) —  
'Come,'  
He said, 'come nearer! Let the  
bloom

"Of life grow over, undenied,  
This bridge of death, which is not  
wide:  
I shall be soon at the other side.

"Come, kiss me!' So the one in  
truth  
Who loved him best, in love, not ruth,  
Bowed down, and kissed him mouth  
to mouth:

"And in that kiss of love was won  
Life's manumission. All was done:  
The mouth that kissed last kissed  
alone.

"But in the former, confluent kiss,  
The same was sealed, I think, by His,  
To words of truth and uprightness."

The child's voice trembled, his lips  
shook  
Like a rose leaning o'er a brook,  
Which vibrates, though it is not  
struck.

"And who," I asked, a little moved,  
Yet curious-eyed, "was this that  
loved  
And kissed him last, as it beloved?"

"I," softly said the child; and then,  
"I," said he louder, once again:  
"His son, my rank is among men:

"And, now that men exalt his name,  
I come to gather palms with them,  
That holy love may hallow fame.

"He did not die alone, nor should  
His memory live so, 'mid these rude  
World-praises — a worse solitude.

"Me, a voice calleth to that tomb  
Where these are strewing branch and  
bloom,  
Saying, 'Come nearer:' and I come.

"Glory to God!" resumèd he,  
And his eyes smiled for victory  
O'er their own tears which I could  
see

Fallen on the palm, down cheek and  
chin —

"That poet now has entered in  
The place of rest which is not sin.

"And while he rests, his songs in  
troops  
Walk up and down our earthly  
slopes,  
Companioned by diviner hopes."

"But *thou*," I murmured to engage  
The child's speech farther, "hast an  
age  
Too tender for this orphanage."

"Glory to God — to God!" he saith,  
"KNOWLEDGE BY SUFFERING ENTER-  
ETH,  
AND LIFE IS PERFECTED BY DEATH."

## THE POET'S VOW.

— "Oh, be wiser thou,  
Instructed that true knowledge leads to love."

WORDSWORTH.

### PART THE FIRST.

SHOWING WHEREFORE THE VOW WAS MADE.

#### I.

EVE is a twofold mystery;  
The stillness Earth doth keep,  
The motion wherewith human hearts  
Do each to either leap  
As if all souls between the poles  
Felt "Parting comes in sleep."

#### II.

The rowers lift their oars to view  
Each other in the sea;  
The landsmen watch the rocking  
boats  
In a pleasant company;  
While up the hill go gladlier still  
Dear friends by two and three.

#### III.

The peasant's wife hath looked with-  
out  
Her cottage-door, and smiled:  
For there the peasant drops his spade  
To clasp his youngest child,  
Which hath no speech; but its hand  
can reach  
And stroke his forehead mild.

#### IV.

A poet sate that eventide  
Within his hall alone,  
As silent as its ancient lords  
In the confined place of stone,  
When the bat hath shrunk from the  
praying monk,  
And the praying monk is gone.

#### V.

Nor wore the dead a stiller face  
Beneath the cerement's roll:  
His lips refusing out in words

Their mystic thoughts to dole,  
His steadfast eye burnt inwardly,  
As burning out his soul.

#### VI.

You would not think that brow could  
e'er  
Ungentle moods express;  
Yet seemed it, in this troubled world,  
Too calm for gentleness,  
When the very star that shines from  
far  
Shines trembling ne'ertheless.

#### VII.

It lacked, all need, the softening light  
Which other brows supply:  
We should conjoin the scathed trunks  
Of our humanity,  
That each leafless spray intertwining may  
Look softer 'gainst the sky.

#### VIII.

None gazed within the poet's face;  
The poet gazed in none:  
He threw a lonely shadow straight  
Before the moon and sun,  
Affronting Nature's heaven-dwelling  
creatures  
With wrong to Nature done:

#### IX.

Because this poet daringly  
— The nature at his heart,  
And that quick tune along his veins  
He could not change by art —  
Had vowed his blood of brotherhood  
To a stagnant place apart.

#### X.

He did not vow in fear, or wrath,  
Or grief's fantastic whim,  
But, weights and shows of sensual  
things

Too closely crossing him,  
On his soul's eyelid the pressure  
    slid,  
And made its vision dim.

## XI.

And darkening in the dark he strove,  
'Twixt earth and sea and sky,  
To lose in shadow, wave, and cloud,  
His brother's haunting cry:  
The winds were welcome as they  
    swept,  
God's five-day work he would accept,  
But let the rest go by.

## XII.

He cried, "O touching, patient Earth,  
That weepst in thy glee,  
Whom God created very good,  
And very mournful, we!  
Thy voice of moan doth reach his  
    throne,  
As Abel's rose from thee.

## XIII.

"Poor crystal sky with stars astray!  
Mad winds that howling go  
From east to west! perplexed seas  
That stagger from their blow!  
O motion wild! O wave defiled!  
Our curse hath made you so.

## XIV.

"We! and our curse! do I partake  
The desiccating sin?  
Have I the apple at my lips?  
The money-lust within?  
Do I human stand with the wounding  
    hand,  
To the blasting heart akin?"

## XV.

"Thou solemn pathos of all things,  
For solemn joy designed!  
Behold, submissive to your cause,  
An holy wrath I find,  
And for your sake the bondage break  
That knits me to my kind.

## XVI.

"Hear me forswear man's sym-  
    thies,  
His pleasant yea and no,  
His riot on the piteous earth  
Whereon his thistles grow,  
His changing love — with stars above,  
His pride — with graves below.

## XVII.

"Hear me forswear his roof by night,  
His bread and salt by day,  
His talkings at the wood-fire hearth,  
His greetings by the way,  
His answering looks, his systemed  
    books,  
All man, for aye and aye.

## XVIII.

"That so my purged, once human  
    heart,  
From all the human rent,  
May gather strength to pledge and  
    drink  
Your wine of wonderment,  
While you pardon me all blessingly  
The woe mine Adam sent.

## XIX.

"And I shall feel your unseen looks  
Innumerable, constant, deep,  
And soft as haunted Adam once,  
Though sadder round me creep —  
As slumbering men have mystic ken  
Of watchers on their sleep.

## XX.

"And ever, when I lift my brow  
At evening to the sun,  
No voice of woman or of child  
Recording 'Day is done.'  
Your silences shall a love express,  
More deep than such an one."

## PART THE SECOND.

SHOWING TO WHOM THE VOW WAS DE-  
    CLARED.

## I.

THE poet's vow was inly sworn,  
The poet's vow was told.  
He shared among his crowding friends  
The silver and the gold;  
They clasping bland his gift, his hand  
In a somewhat slacker hold.

## II.

They wended forth, the crowding  
    friends,  
With farewells smooth and kind.  
They wended forth, the solaced  
    friends,

And left but twain behind:  
One loved him true as brothers do,  
And one was Rosalind.

## III.

He said, "My friends have wended  
forth  
With farewells smooth and kind;  
Mine oldest friend, my plighted bride,  
Ye need not stay behind:  
Friend, wed my fair bride for my  
sake,  
And let my lands ancestral make  
A dower for Rosalind.

## IV.

"And when beside your wassail board  
Ye bless your social lot,  
I charge you that the giver be  
In all his gifts forgot,  
Or alone of all his words recall  
The last, — Lament me not."

## V.

She looked upon him silently  
With her large, doubting eyes,  
Like a child that never knew but love,  
Whom words of wrath surprise,  
Till the rose did break from either  
cheek,  
And the sudden tears did rise.

## VI.

She looked upon him mournfully,  
While her large eyes were grown  
Yet larger with the steady tears,  
Till, all his purpose known,  
She turned slow, as she would go —  
The tears were shaken down.

## VII.

She turned slow, as she would go,  
Then quickly turned again,  
And gazing in his face to seek  
Some little touch of pain,  
"I thought," she said, — but shook  
her head:  
She tried that speech in vain.

## VIII.

"I thought — but I am half a child,  
And very sage art thou —  
The teachings of the heaven and earth  
Should keep us soft and low.  
They have drawn *my* tears in early  
years,  
Or ere I wept — as now.

## IX.

"But now that in thy face I read  
Their cruel homily,  
Before their beauty I would fain  
Untouched, unsoftened be, —  
If I indeed could look on even  
The senseless, loveless earth and  
heaven  
As thou canst look on me!

## X.

"And couldst thou as coldly view  
Thy childhood's far abode,  
Where little feet kept time with  
thine  
Along the dewy sod,  
And thy mother's look from holy  
book  
Rose like a thought of God?

## XI.

"O brother, — called so, e'er her  
last  
Betrothing words were said!  
O fellow-watcher in her room,  
With hushed voice and tread!  
Rememberest thou how, hand in  
hand,  
O friend, O lover, we did stand,  
And knew that she was dead?

## XII.

"I will not live Sir Roland's bride,  
That dower I will not hold;  
I tread below my feet that go,  
These parchments bought and  
sold:  
The tears I weep are mine to keep,  
And worthier than thy gold."

## XIII.

The poet and Sir Roland stood  
Alone, each turned to each,  
Till Roland brake the silence left  
By that soft-throbbing speech —  
"Poor heart!" he cried, "it vainly  
tried  
The distant heart to reach.

## XIV.

"And thou, O distant, sinful heart  
That climbest up so high  
To wrap and blind thee with the  
snows  
That cause to dream and die,  
What blessing can from lips of man  
Approach thee with his sigh?

## XV.

"Ay, what from earth—create for  
man,  
And moaning in his moan?  
Ay, what from stars—revealed to  
man,  
And man-named one by one?  
Ay, more! what blessing can be  
given  
Where the spirits seven do show in  
heaven  
A MAN upon the throne?"

## XVI.

"A man on earth HE wandered once,  
All meek and undefiled,  
And those who loved him said 'He  
wept;'  
None ever said 'He smiled;'  
Yet there might have been a smile  
unseen,  
When he bowed his holy face, I ween,  
To bless that happy child.

## XVII.

"And now HE pleadeth up in heaven  
For our humanities,  
Till the ruddy light on seraphs' wings  
In pale emotion dies.  
They can better bear their Godhead's  
glare  
Than the pathos of his eyes.

## XVIII.

"I will go pray our God to-day  
To teach thee how to scan  
His work divine, for human use,  
Since earth on axle ran;  
To teach thee to discern as plain  
His grief divine, the blood-drop's  
stain  
He left there, MAN for man.

## XIX.

"So, for the blood's sake shed by Him  
Whom angels God declare,  
Tears like it, moist and warm with  
love,  
Thy reverent eyes shall wear,  
To see i' the face of Adam's race  
The nature God doth share."

## XX.

"I heard," the poet said, "thy voice  
As dimly as thy breath:  
The sound was like the noise of life  
To one anear his death;

Or of waves that fail to stir the pale  
Sear leaf they roll beneath.

## XXI.

"And still between the sound and  
me  
White creatures like a mist  
Did interfloat confusedly,  
Mysterious shapes unwist:  
Across my heart and across my brow  
I felt them droop like wreaths of  
snow,  
To still the pulse they kist.

## XXII.

"The castle and its lands are thine—  
The poor's—it shall be done.  
Go, *man*, to love! I go to live  
In Courland hall, alone:  
The bats along the ceilings cling,  
The lizards in the floors do run,  
And storms and years have worn and  
reft  
The stain by human builders left  
In working at the stone."

## PART THE THIRD.

## SHOWING HOW THE VOW WAS KEPT.

## I.

HE dwelt alone, and sun and moon  
Were witness that he made  
Rejection of his humanness  
Until they seemed to fade:  
His face did so, for he did grow  
Of his own soul afraid.

## II.

The self-poised God may dwell alone  
With inward glorying;  
But God's chief angel waiteth for  
A brother's voice to sing;  
And a lonely creature of sinful nature,  
It is an awful thing.

## III.

An awful thing that feared itself;  
While many years did roll,  
A lonely man, a feeble man,  
A part beneath the whole,  
He bore by day, he bore by night,  
That pressure of God's infinite  
Upon his finite soul.



## IV.

The poet at his lattice sate  
 And downward lookèd he.  
 Three Christians wended by to  
 prayers,  
 With mute ones in their ee;  
 Each turned above a face of love,  
 And called him to the far chapelle  
 With voice more tuneful than its bell;  
 But still they wended three.

## V.

There journeyed by a bridal pomp,  
 A bridegroom and his dame;  
 He speaketh low for happiness,  
 She blusseth red for shame:  
 But never a tone of benison  
 From out the lattice came.

## VI.

A little child with inward song,  
 No louder noise to dare,  
 Stood near the wall to see at play  
 The lizards green and rare;  
 Unblessed the while for his childish  
 smile,  
 Which cometh unaware.

## PART THE FOURTH.

SHOWING HOW ROSALIND FARED BY THE  
 KEEPING OF THE VOW.

## I.

IN death-sheets lieth Rosalind,  
 As white and still as they;  
 And the old nurse that watched her bed  
 Rose up with "Well-a-day!"  
 And oped the casement to let in  
 The sun, and that sweet, doubtful din  
 Which droppeth from the grass and  
 bough  
 Sans wind and bird, none knoweth  
 how,  
 To cheer her as she lay.

## II.

The old nurse started when she saw  
 Her sudden look of woe;  
 But the quick, wan tremblings round  
 her mouth  
 In a meek smile did go,  
 And calm she said, "When I am dead,  
 Dear nurse it shall be so.

## III.

"Till then, shut out those sights and  
 sounds,  
 And pray God pardon me  
 That I without this pain no more  
 His blessed works can see;  
 And lean beside me, loving nurse,  
 That thou mayst hear, ere I am  
 worse  
 What thy last love should be."

## IV.

The loving nurse leant over her,  
 As white she lay beneath, —  
 The old eyes searching, dim with  
 life,  
 The young ones dim with death, —  
 To read their look if sound forsook  
 The trying, trembling breath.

## V.

"When all this feeble breath is done,  
 And I on bier am laid,  
 My tresses smoothed for never a feast,  
 My body in shroud arrayed,  
 Uplift each palm in a saintly calm,  
 As if that still I prayed.

## VI.

"And heap beneath mine head the  
 flowers  
 You stoop so low to pull, —  
 The little white flowers from the wood  
 Which grow there in the cool,  
 Which *he* and I, in childhood's  
 games,  
 Went plucking, knowing not their  
 names,  
 And filled thine apron full.

## VII.

"Weep not! I weep not. Death is  
 strong;  
 The eyes of Death are dry:  
 But lay this scroll upon my breast  
 When hushed its heavings lie,  
 And wait a while for the corpse's smile  
 Which shineth presently.

## VIII.

"And when it shineth, straightway  
 call  
 Thy youngest children dear,  
 And bid them gently carry me  
 All barefaced on the bier;  
 But bid them pass my kirkyard grass  
 That waveth long anear.

## IX.

“And up the bank where I used to sit,  
And dream what life would be;  
Along the brook with its sunny look  
Akin to living glee;  
O'er the windy hill, through the forest still,—  
Let them gently carry me.

## X.

“And through the piney forest still,  
And down the open moorland,  
Round where the sea beats mistily  
And blindly on the foreland;  
And let them chant that hymn I know,  
Bearing me soft, bearing me slow,  
To the ancient hall of Courland.

## XI.

“And when withal they near the hall,  
In silence let them lay  
My bier before the bolted door,  
And leave it for a day:  
For I have vowed, though I am proud,  
To go there as a guest in shroud,  
And not be turned away.”

## XII.

The old nurse looked within her eyes,  
Whose mutual look was gone;  
The old nurse stooped upon her mouth,  
Whose answering voice was done;  
And nought she heard, till a little bird,  
Upon the casement's woodbine swinging,  
Broke out into a loud, sweet singing  
For joy o' the summer sun:  
“Alack! alack!”—she watched no more;  
With head on knee she wailèd sore,  
And the little bird sang o'er and o'er  
For joy o' the summer sun.

## PART THE FIFTH.

## SHOWING HOW THE VOW WAS BROKEN.

## I.

THE poet oped his bolted door  
The midnight sky to view;  
A spirit-feel was in the air  
Which seemed to touch his spirit bare

Whenever his breath he drew;  
And the stars a liquid softness had,  
As alone their holiness forbade  
Their falling with the dew.

## II.

They shine upon the steadfast hills,  
Upon the swinging tide,  
Upon the narrow track of beach,  
And the murmuring pebbles pied:  
They shine on every lovely place,  
They shine upon the corpse's face,  
As *it* were fair beside.

## III.

It lay before him, human-like,  
Yet so unlike a thing!  
More awful in its shrouded pomp  
Than any crownèd king;  
All calm and cold, as it did hold  
Some secret, glorying.

## IV.

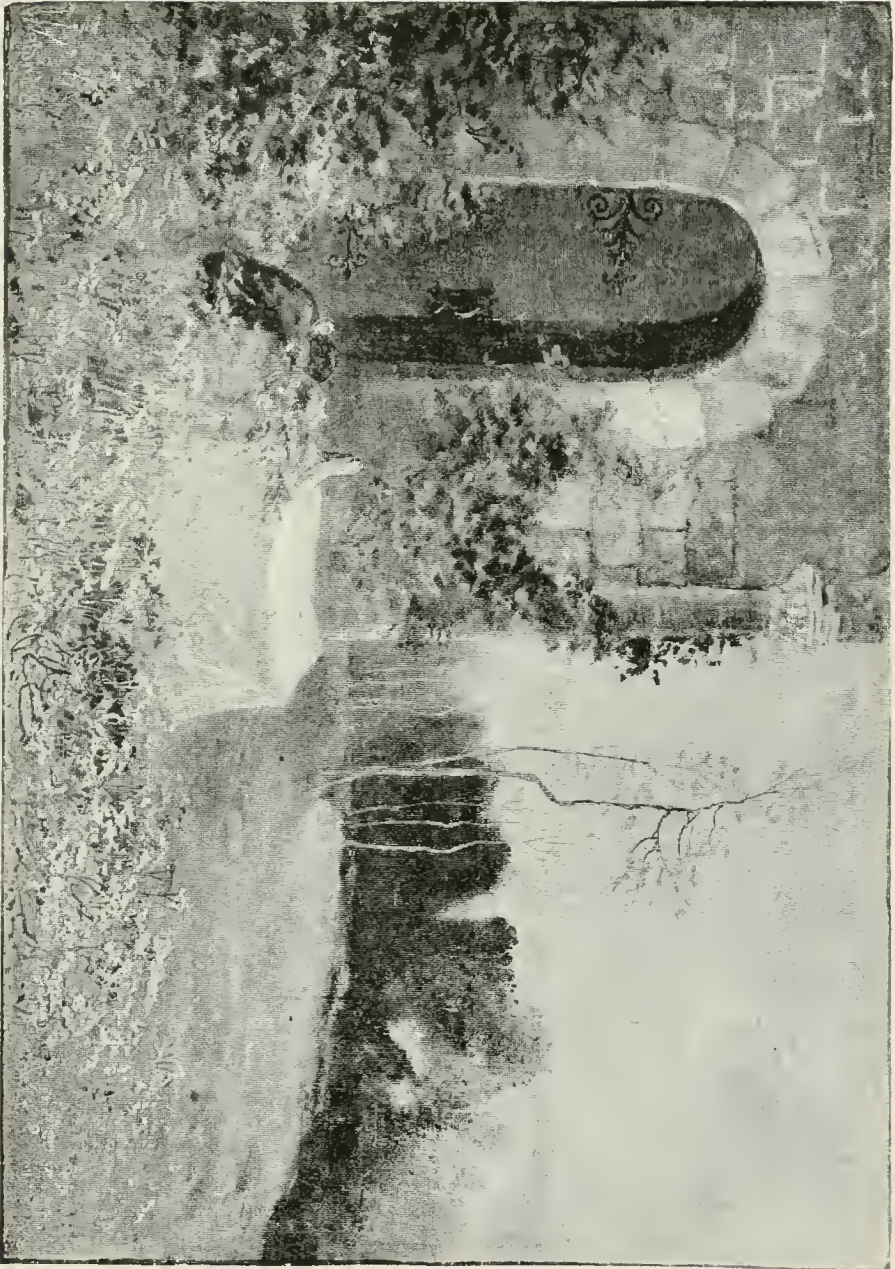
A heavier weight than of its clay  
Clung to his heart and knee:  
As if those folded palms could strike,  
He staggered groaningly,  
And then o'erlung, without a groan,  
The meek, close mouth that smiled  
alone,  
Whose speech the scroll must be.

## THE WORDS OF ROSALIND'S SCROLL.

“I left thee last a child at heart,  
A woman scarce in years:  
I come to thee a solemn corpse,  
Which neither feels nor fears.  
I have no breath to use in sighs:  
They laid the dead-weights on mine  
eyes  
To seal them safe from tears.

“Look on me with thine own calm  
look:  
I meet it calm as thou.  
No look of thine can change *this* smile,  
Or break thy sinful vow.  
I tell thee that my poor scorned heart  
Is of thine earth—thine earth, a part:  
It cannot vex thee now.

“But out, alas! these words are writ  
By a living, loving one,  
Adown whose cheeks the proofs of  
life,



“He boweth on thy corpse his face  
And weepeth as the blind.” — Page 267.



The warm quick tears, do run:  
Ah, let the unloving corpse control  
Thy scorn back from the loving soul  
Whose place of rest is won.

"I have prayed for thee, with bursting sobs,  
When passion's course was free;  
I have prayed for thee, with silent lips,  
In the anguish none could see:  
They whispered oft, 'She sleepeth soft' —  
But I only prayed for thee.

"Go to! I pray for thee no more:  
The corpse's tongue is still;  
Its folded fingers point to heaven,  
But point there stiff and chill:  
No further wrong, no further woe,  
Hath license from the sin below  
Its tranquil heart to thrill.

"I charge thee, by the living's prayer,  
And the dead's silentness,  
To wring from out thy soul a cry  
Which God shall hear and bless!  
Lest Heaven's own palm droop in my hand,  
And pale among the saints I stand,  
A saint companionless.'

## v.

Bow lower down before the throne,  
Triumphant Rosalind!  
He boweth on thy corpse his face,  
And weepeth as the blind:  
'Twas a dread sight to see them so,  
For the senseless corpse rocked to and fro  
With the wail of his living mind.

## vi.

But dreader sight, could such be seen,  
His inward mind did lie,  
Whose long-subjected humanness  
Gave out its lion cry,  
And fiercely rent its tenement  
In a mortal agony.

## vii.

I tell you, friends, had you heard his wail,  
'Twould haunt you in court and mart,  
And in merry feast, until you set  
Your cup down to depart, —  
That weeping wild of a reckless child  
From a proud man's broken heart.

## viii.

O broken heart, O broken vow,  
That wore so proud a feature!  
God, grasping as a thunderbolt  
The man's rejected nature,  
Smote him therewith i' the presence high  
Of his so worshipped earth and sky  
That looked on all indifferently —  
A wailing human creature.

## ix.

A human creature found too weak  
To bear his human pain:  
(May Heaven's dear grace have spoken peace  
To his dying heart and brain!)  
For when they came at dawn of day  
To lift the lady's corpse away,  
Her bier was holding twain.

## x.

They dug beneath the kirkyard grass  
For both one dwelling deep;  
To which, when years had mossed  
the stone,  
Sir Roland brought his little son  
To watch the funeral heap:  
And when the happy boy would rather  
Turn upward his blithe eyes to see  
The wood-doves nodding from the tree,  
"Nay, boy, look downward," said his father,  
"Upon this human dust asleep.  
And hold it in thy constant ken  
That God's own unity compresses  
(One into one) the human many,  
And that his everlastingness is  
The bond which is not loosed by any;  
That thou and I this law must keep.  
If not in love, in sorrow then —  
Though smiling not like other men,  
Still, like them we must weep."

## THE ROMAUNT OF MARGRET.

“ Can my affections find out nothing best,  
But still and still remove? ”

QUARLES.

I.

I PLANT a tree whose leaf  
The yew-tree leaf will suit;  
But when its shade is o'er you laid,  
Turn round, and pluck the fruit.  
Now reach my harp from off the wall  
Where shines the sun aslant:  
The sun may shine and we be cold!  
O harken, loving hearts and bold,  
Unto my wild romaunt.  
Margret, Margret.

II.

Sitteth the fair ladye  
Close to the river-side  
Which runneth on with a merry tone  
Her merry thoughts to guide:  
It runneth through the trees,  
It runneth by the hill,  
Nathless the lady's thoughts have  
found  
A way more pleasant still.  
Margret, Margret.

III.

The night is in her hair,  
And giveth shade to shade;  
And the pale moonlight on her fore-  
head white  
Like a spirit's hand is laid;  
Her lips part with a smile  
Instead of speakings done:  
I ween she thinketh of a voice,  
Albeit uttering none.  
Margret, Margret.

IV.

All little birds do sit  
With heads beneath their wings;  
Nature doth seem in a mystic dream,  
Absorbed from her living things:

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That dream by that ladye  
Is certes unpartook,  
For she looketh to the high cold  
stars  
With a tender human look.  
Margret, Margret.

V.

The lady's shadow lies  
Upon the running river;  
It lieth no less in its quietness,  
For that which resteth never:  
Most like a trusting heart  
Upon a passing faith,  
Or as upon the course of life  
The steadfast doom of death.  
Margret, Margret.

VI.

The lady doth not move,  
The lady doth not dream;  
Yet she seeth her shade no longer  
laid  
In rest upon the stream:  
It shaketh without wind,  
It parteth from the tide,  
It standeth upright in the cleft moon-  
light,  
It sitteth at her side.  
Margret, Margret.

VII.

Look in its face, ladye,  
And keep thee from thy swound;  
With a spirit bold thy pulses hold,  
And hear its voice's sound:  
For so will sound thy voice  
When thy face is to the wall,  
And such will be thy face, ladye,  
When the maidens work thy pall.  
Margret, Margret.

## VIII.

"Am I not like to thee?"  
The voice was calm and low,  
And between each word you might  
have heard  
The silent forests grow:  
"The like may sway the like;"  
By which mysterious law  
Mine eyes from thine, and my lips  
from thine,  
The light and breath may draw.  
Margret, Margret.

## IX.

"My lips do need thy breath,  
My lips do need thy smile,  
And my pallid eyne, that light in  
thine  
Which met the stars erewhile:  
Yet go with light and life,  
If that thou lovest one  
In all the earth who loveth thee  
As truly as the sun.  
Margret, Margret.

## X.

Her cheek had waxèd white,  
Like cloud at fall of snow;  
Then, like to one at set of sun,  
It waxèd red also:  
For love's name maketh bold,  
As if the loved were near:  
And then she sighed the deep, long  
sigh  
Which cometh after fear.  
Margret, Margret.

## XI.

"Now, sooth, I fear thee not —  
Shall never fear thee now!"  
(And a noble sight was the sudden  
light  
Which lit her lifted brow.)  
"Can earth be dry of streams,  
Or hearts of love?" she said;  
"Who doubteth love can know not  
love:  
He is already dead."  
Margret, Margret.

## XII.

"I have" . . . and here her lips  
Some word in pause did keep,  
And gave the while a quiet smile,  
As if they paused in sleep, —

"I have . . . a brother dear,  
A knight of knightly fame:  
I broidered him a knightly scarf  
With letters of my name.  
Margret, Margret.

## XIII.

"I fed his gray gosshawk,  
I kissed his fierce bloodhound,  
I sate at home when he might come,  
And caught his horn's far sound:  
I sang him hunter's songs,  
I poured him the red wine,  
He looked across the cup, and said,  
*I love thee, sister mine.*"  
Margret, Margret.

## XIV.

IT trembled on the grass  
With a low, shadowy laughter;  
The sounding river which rolled, for-  
ever  
Stood dumb and stagnant after:  
"Brave knight thy brother is!  
But better loveth he  
Thy chalice wine than thy chanted  
song,  
And better both than thee,  
Margret, Margret."

## XV.

The lady did not heed  
The river's silence, while  
Her own thoughts still ran at their  
will,  
And calm was still her smile.  
"My little sister wears  
The look our mother wore:  
I smooth her locks with a golden  
comb,  
I bless her evermore."  
Margret, Margret.

## XVI.

"I gave her my first bird  
When first my voice it knew;  
I made her share my posies rare,  
And told her where they grew:  
I taught her God's dear name  
With prayer and praise to tell:  
She looked from heaven into my face,  
And said, *I love thee well.*"  
Margret, Margret.

## XVII.

IT trembled on the grass.  
 With a low, shadowy laughter;  
 You could see each bird as it woke  
 and stared  
 Through the shrivelled foliage  
 after.  
 "Fair child thy sister is!  
 But better loveth she  
 Thy golden comb than thy gathered  
 flowers,  
 And better both than thee,  
 Margret, Margret."

## XVIII.

Thy lady did not heed  
 The withering on the bough:  
 Still calm her smile, albeit the while  
 A little pale her brow:  
 "I have a father old,  
 The lord of ancient halls;  
 An hundred friends are in his court,  
 Yet only me he calls.  
 Margret, Margret."

## XIX.

"An hundred knights are in his  
 court,  
 Yet read I by his knee;  
 And when forth they go to the tour-  
 ney show  
 I rise not up to see:  
 'Tis a weary book to read,  
 My tryst's at set of sun;  
 But loving and dear beneath the stars  
 Is his blessing when I've done."  
 Margret, Margret."

## XX.

IT trembled on the grass  
 With a low, shadowy laughter;  
 And moon and star, though bright  
 and far,  
 Did shrink and darken after.  
 "High lord thy father is!  
 But better loveth he  
 His ancient halls than his hundred  
 friends,  
 His ancient halls, than thee,  
 Margret, Margret."

## XXI.

The lady did not heed  
 That the far stars did fail;  
 Still calm her smile, albeit the while —  
 Nay, but she is not pale!

"I have more than a friend  
 Across the mountains dim:  
 No other's voice is soft to me,  
 Unless it nameth *him*."  
 Margret, Margret

## XXII.

"Though louder beats my heart,  
 I know his tread again,  
 And his fair plume aye, unless turned  
 away,  
 For the tears do blind me then:  
 We brake no gold, a sign  
 Of stronger faith to be;  
 But I wear his last look in my soul,  
 Which said, *I love but thee!*"  
 Margret, Margret.

## XXIII.

IT trembled on the grass  
 With a low, shadowy laughter;  
 And the wind did toll, as a passing  
 soul  
 Were sped by church-bell after;  
 And shadows, 'stead of light,  
 Fell from the stars above,  
 In flakes of darkness on her face  
 Still bright with trusting love.  
 Margret, Margret.

## XXIV.

"He *loved* but only thee!  
 That love is transient too.  
 The wild hawk's bill doth dabble still  
 I' the mouth that vowed thee true:  
 Will he open his dull eyes,  
 When tears fall on his brow?  
 Behold the death-worm to his heart  
 Is a nearer thing than *thou*,  
 Margret, Margret."

## XXV.

Her face was on the ground,  
 None saw the agony;  
 But the men at sea did that night  
 agree  
 They heard a drowning cry:  
 And when the morning brake,  
 Fast rolled the river's tide,  
 With the green trees waving overhead,  
 And a white corse laid beside.  
 Margret, Margret



XXVI.

A knight's bloodhound and he  
The funeral watch did keep;  
With a thought o' the chase, he stroked  
its face,  
As it howled to see him weep.  
A fair child kissed the dead,  
But shrank before its cold.  
And alone yet proudly in his hall  
Did stand a baron old.

Margret, Margret.

XXVII.

Hang up my harp again !  
I have no voice for song.  
Not song, but wail, and mourners  
pale,  
Not bards, to love belong.  
O failing human love !  
O light, by darkness known !  
Oh false, the while thou treadest earth!  
Oh deaf beneath the stone !

Margret, Margret.

ISOBEL'S CHILD.

— "so find we profit,  
By losing of our prayers."

SHAKESPEARE.

I.

To rest the weary nurse has gone:  
An eight-day watch had watchèd  
she,  
Still rocking beneath sun and moon  
The baby on her knee,  
Till Isobel its mother said,  
"The fever waneth, wend to bed,  
For now the watch comes round to  
me."

II.

Then wearily the nurse did throw  
Her pallet in the darkest place  
Of that sick-room, and slept and  
dreamed :  
For, as the gusty wind did blow  
The night-lamp's flare across her  
face,  
She saw or seemed to see, but  
dreamed,  
That the poplars tall on the opposite  
hill,  
The seven tall poplars on the hill,  
Did clasp the setting sun until  
His rays dropped from him, pined and  
still  
As blossoms in frost,  
Till he waned and paled, so weirdly  
crossed,

To the color of moonlight which doth  
pass  
Over the dank ridged churchyard  
grass.  
The poplars held the sun, and he  
The eyes of the nurse that they should  
not see  
— Not for a moment, the babe on her  
knee,  
Though she shuddered to feel that it  
grew to be  
Too chill, and lay too heavily.

III.

She only dreamed ; for all the while  
'Twas Lady Isobel that kept  
The little baby: and it slept  
Fast, warm, as if its mother's smile,  
Laden with love's dewy weight,  
And red as rose of Harpocrate,  
Dropt upon its eyelids, prest  
Lashes to cheek in a sealèd rest.

IV.

And more and more smiled Isobel  
To see the baby sleep so well:  
She knew not that she smiled.  
Against the lattice, dull and wild  
Drive the heavy, droning drops,  
Drop by drop, the sound being one;

As momentarily time's segments fall  
On the ear of God, who hears through  
all

Eternity's unbroken monotone.  
And more and more smiled Isobel  
To see the baby sleep so well :  
She knew not that she smiled.  
The wind in intermission stops  
Down in the beechen forest,  
Then cries aloud  
As one at the sorest,  
Self-stung, self-driven,  
And rises up to its very tops,  
Stiffening erect the branches bowed,  
Dilating with a tempest-soul  
The trees that with their dark hands  
break

Through their own outline, and heavy  
roll

Shadows as massive as clouds in  
heaven  
Across the castle lake.

And more and more smiled Isobel  
To see the baby sleep so well.  
She knew not that she smiled;  
She knew not that the storm was wild;  
Through the uproar drear she could  
not hear

The castle clock which struck anear:  
She heard the low, light breathing of  
her child.

## V.

Oh ! sight for wondering look,  
While the external nature broke  
Into such abandonment,  
While the very mist, heart-rent  
By the lightning, seemed to eddy  
Against nature, with a din, —  
A sense of silence and of steady  
Natural calm appeared to come  
From things without, and enter in  
The human creature's room.

## VI.

So motionless she sate,  
The babe asleep upon her knees,  
You might have dreamed their souls  
had gone  
Away to things inanimate,  
In such to live, in such to moan,  
And that their bodies had ta'en back,  
In mystic change, all silences  
That cross the sky in cloudy rack,  
Or dwell beneath the reedy ground  
In waters safe from their own sound:  
Only she wore  
The deepening smile I named before,

And *that* a deepening love express;  
And who at once can love and rest ?

## VII.

In sooth the smile that then was  
keeping  
Watch upon the baby sleeping,  
Floated with its tender light  
Downward, from the drooping eyes,  
Upward, from the lips apart,  
Over cheeks which had grown white  
With an eight-day weeping :  
All smiles come in such a wise  
Where tears shall fall or have of old --  
Like northern lights that fill the heart  
Of heaven in sign of cold.

## VIII.

Motionless she sate.  
Her hair had fallen by its weight  
On each side of her smile, and lay  
Very blackly on the arm  
Where the baby nestled warm,  
Pale as baby carved in stone  
Seen by glimpses of the moon  
Up a dark cathedral aisle;  
But through the storm no moonbeam  
fell  
Upon the child of Isobel —  
Perhaps you saw it by the ray  
Alone of her still smile.

## IX.

A solemn thing it is to me  
To look upon a babe that sleeps,  
Wearing in its spirit-deeps  
The undeveloped mystery  
Of our Adam's taint and woe,  
Which, when they developed be,  
Will not let it slumber so;  
Lying new in life beneath  
The shadow of the coming death,  
With that soft, low, quiet breath,  
As if it felt the sun;  
Knowing all things by their blooms.  
Not their roots, yea, sun and sky  
Only by the warmth that comes  
Out of each; earth only by  
The pleasant hues that o'er it run;  
And human love by drops of sweet  
White nourishment still hanging  
round  
The little mouth so slumber-  
bound:  
All which broken sentiency  
And conclusion incomplete,  
Will gather and unite, and climb  
To an immortality

Good or evil, each sublime,  
 Through life and death to life again.  
 O little lids, now folded fast,  
 Must ye learn to drop at last  
 Our large and burning tears?  
 O warm quick body, must thou lie,  
 When the time comes round to die,  
 Still from all the whirl of years,  
 Bare of all the joy and pain?  
 O small frail being, wilt thou stand  
 At God's right hand,  
 Lifting up those sleeping eyes  
 Dilated by great destinies,  
 To an endless waking? thrones and  
 seraphim.  
 Through the long ranks of their solemnities,  
 Sunning thee with calm looks of  
 Heaven's surprise,  
 But thine alone, on Him?  
 Or else, self-willed, to tread the God-  
 less place,  
 (God keep thy will!) feel thine own  
 energies  
 Cold, strong, objectless, like a dead  
 man's clasp,  
 The sleepless, deathless life within  
 thee grasp,  
 While myriad faces, like one change-  
 less face,  
 With woe, *not love's*, shall glass thee  
 everywhere,  
 And overcome thee with thine own  
 despair?

## X.

More soft, less solemn images  
 Drifted o'er the lady's heart  
 Silently as snow.  
 She had seen eight days depart  
 Hour by hour on bended knees,  
 With pale wrung hands and pray-  
 ings low  
 And broken, through which came the  
 sound  
 Of tears that fell against the ground,  
 Making sad stops: "Dear Lord, dear  
 Lord!"  
 She still had prayed (the heavenly  
 word  
 Broken by an earthly sigh)  
 — "Thou who didst not erst deny  
 The mother-joy to Mary mild,  
 Blessed in the blessed child  
 Which harkened in meek babyhood  
 Her cradle-hymn, albeit used  
 To all that music interfused  
 In breasts of angels high and good!

Oh, take not, Lord, my babe away!  
 Oh, take not to thy songful heaven  
 The pretty baby thou hast given,  
 Or ere that I have seen him play  
 Around his father's knees and known  
 That *he* knew how my love has gone  
 From all the world to him.  
 Think, God among the cherubim,  
 How I shall shiver every day  
 In thy June sunshine, knowing where  
 The grave-grass keeps it from his fair  
 Still cheeks, and feel at every tread  
 His little body which is dead,  
 And hidden in thy turfy fold,  
 Doth make thy whole warm earth  
 a-cold!

O God, I am so young, so young —  
 I am not used to tears at nights  
 Instead of slumber — not to prayer  
 With sobbing lips, and hands out-  
 wrung!

Thou knowest all my prayings were  
 'I bless thee, God, for past de-  
 lights —

Thank God!' I am not used to bear  
 Hard thoughts of death; the earth  
 doth cover

No face from me of friend or lover:  
 And must the first who teaches me  
 The form of shrouds and funerals be  
 Mine own first-born beloved — he  
 Who taught me first this mother-love?  
 Dear Lord, who spreadest out above  
 Thy loving, transpierced hands to  
 meet

All lifted hearts with blessing sweet,  
 Pierce not my heart, my tender heart  
 Thou madest tender! Thou who art  
 So happy in thy heaven always,  
 Take not mine only bliss away!"

## XI.

She so had prayed; and God, who  
 hears  
 Through seraph-songs the sound of  
 tears,

From that beloved babe had ta'en  
 The fever and the beating pain.

And more and more smiled Isobel  
 To see the baby sleep so well.

(She knew not that she smiled, I  
 wis)

Until the pleasant gradual thought  
 Which near her heart the smile in-  
 wrought,

Now soft and slow, itself did seem  
 To float along a happy dream,

Beyond it into speech like this.

## XII.

"I prayed for thee, my little child,  
And God has heard my prayer!  
And when thy babyhood is gone,  
We two together undefiled  
By men's repinings, will kneel down  
Upon his earth which will be fair  
(Not covering thee, sweet!) to us  
twain,  
And give him thankful praise."

## XIII.

Dully and wildly drives the rain:  
Against the lattices drives the rain.

## XIV.

"I thank him now, that I can think  
Of those same future days,  
Nor from the harmless image shrink  
Of what I there might see. —  
Strange babies on their mothers' knee.  
Whose innocent soft faces might  
From off mine eyelids strike the light,  
With looks not meant for me!"

## XV.

Gustily blows the wind through the  
rain,  
As against the lattices drives the rain.

## XVI.

"But now, O baby mine, together  
We turn this hope of ours again  
To many an hour of summer  
weather,  
When we shall sit and intertwine  
Our spirits, and instruct each other  
In the pure loves of child and  
mother!  
Two human loves make one divine."

## XVII.

The thunder tears through the wind  
and the rain,  
As full on the lattices drives the rain.

## XVIII.

"My little child, what wilt thou  
choose?  
Now let me look at thee and pon-  
der.  
What gladness from the gladnesses  
Futurity is spreading under  
Thy gladsome sight? Beneath the  
trees  
Wilt thou lean all day, and lose

Thy spirit with the river seen  
Intermittently between  
The winding beechen alleys, —  
Half in labor, half repose,  
Like a shepherd keeping sheep,  
Thou, with only thoughts to keep  
Which never a bound will overpass,  
And which are innocent as those  
That feed among Arcadian valleys  
Upon the dewy grass?"

## XIX.

The large white owl that with age is  
blind,  
That hath sate for years in the old  
tree hollow,  
Is carried away in a gust of wind;  
His wings could bear him not as fast  
As he goeth now the lattice past;  
He is borne by the winds, the rains  
do follow,  
His white wings to the blast outflow-  
ing,  
He hooteth in going,  
And still in the lightnings coldly  
glitter  
His round unblinking eyes.

## XX.

"Or, baby, wilt thou think it fitter  
To be eloquent and wise, —  
One upon whose lips the air  
Turus to solemn verities  
For men to breathe anew, and win  
A deeper-seated life within?  
Wilt be a philosopher,  
By whose voice the earth and skies  
Shall speak to the unborn?  
Or a poet, broadly spreading  
The golden immortalities  
Of thy soul on natures lorn  
And poor of such, them all to guard  
From their decay, — beneath thy  
treading,  
Earth's flowers recovering hues of  
Eden, —  
And stars drawn downward by thy  
looks,  
To shine ascendant in thy books?"

## XXI.

The tame hawk in the castle-yard,  
How it screams to the lightning, with  
its wet  
Jagged plumes overhanging the para-  
pet!  
And at the lady's door the hound  
Scratches with a crying sound.

XXII.

“ But, O my babe, thy lids are laid  
Close, fast upon thy cheek,  
And not a dream of power and sheen  
Can make a passage up between.  
Thy heart is of thy mother's made,  
Thy looks are very meek,  
And it will be their chosen place  
To rest on some beloved face,  
As these on thine, and let the noise  
Of the whole world go on, nor drown  
The tender silence of thy joys:  
Or, when that silence shall have grown  
Too tender for itself, the same  
Yearning for sound, — to look above  
And utter its one meaning, LOVE,  
That *He* may hear His name.”

XXIII.

No wind, no rain, no thunder !  
The waters had trickled not slowly,  
The thunder was not spent,  
Nor the wind near finishing :  
Who would have said that the storm  
was diminishing ?  
No wind, no rain, no thunder !  
Their noises dropped asunder  
From the earth and the firmament,  
From the towers and the lattices,  
Abrupt and echoless  
As ripe fruits on the ground unshaken  
wholly  
As life in death.  
And sudden and solemn the silence  
fell,  
Startling the heart of Isobel  
As the tempest could not  
Against the door went panting the  
breath  
Of the lady's hound whose cry was  
still,  
And she, constrained how'er she  
would not,  
Lifted her eyes, and saw the moon  
Looking out of heaven alone  
Upon the poplared hill, —  
A calm of God, made visible  
That men might bless it at their  
will.

XXIV.

The moonshine on the baby's face  
Falleth clear and cold;  
The mother's looks have fallen back  
To the same place:  
Because no moon with silver rack,  
Nor broad sunrise in jasper skies,  
Has power to hold  
Our loving eyes,

Which still revert, as ever must  
Wonder and Hope, to gaze on the  
dust.

XXV.

The moonshine on the baby's face  
Cold and clear remaineth;  
The mother's looks do shrink away,  
The mother's looks return to stay,  
As charmed by what paineth:  
Is any glamour in the case ?  
Is it dream, or is it sight ?  
Hath the change upon the wild  
Elements that signs the night,  
Passed upon the child ?  
It is not dream, but sight.

XXVI.

The babe has awakened from sleep,  
And unto the gaze of its mother  
Bent over it, lifted another, —  
Not the baby-looks that go  
Unaimingly to and fro,  
But an earnest gazing deep  
Such as soul gives soul at length  
When by work and wail of years  
It winneth a solemn strength,  
And mourneth as it wears.  
A strong man could not brook.  
With pulse unhurried by fears,  
To meet that baby's look  
O'erglazed by manhood's tears,  
The tears of a man full grown,  
With a power to wring our own,  
In the eyes all undefiled  
Of a little three-months' child, —  
To see that babe-brow wrought  
By the witnessing of thought  
To judgment's prodigy,  
And the small soft mouth unweaned,  
By mother's kiss o'erleaned,  
(Putting the sound of loving  
Where no sound else was moving  
Except the speechless cry)  
Quickened to mind's expression,  
Shaped to articulation,  
Yea, uttering words, yea, naming woe,  
In tones that with it strangely  
went,  
Because so baby-innocent,  
As the child spake out to the mother,  
so:—

XXVII.

“ O mother, mother, loose thy prayer,  
Christ's name hath made it strong.  
It bindeth me, it holdeth me,  
With its most loving cruelty,

From floating my new soul along  
 The happy heavenly air.  
 It bindeth me, it holdeth me  
 In all this dark, upon this dull  
 Low earth by only weepers trod.  
 It bindeth me, it holdeth me!  
 Mine angel looketh sorrowful  
 Upon the face of God.<sup>1</sup>

## XXVIII.

"Mother, mother, can I dream  
 Beneath your earthly trees?  
 I had a vision and a gleam;  
 I heard a sound more sweet than  
 these  
 When rippled by the wind:  
 Did you see the Dove with wings,  
 Bathed in golden glistenings  
 From a sunless light behind,  
 Dropping on me from the sky,  
 Soft as mother's kiss, until  
 I seemed to leap, and yet was still?  
 Saw you how his love-large eye  
 Looked upon me mystic calms,  
 Till the power of His divine  
 Vision was indrawn to mine?"

## XXIX.

"Oh the dream within the dream!  
 I saw celestial places even.  
 Oh the vistas of high palms  
 Making finites of delight  
 Through the heavenly infinite,  
 Lifting up their green still tops  
 To the heaven of heaven!  
 Oh the sweet life-tree that drops  
 Shade like light across the river  
 Glorified in its forever  
 Flowing from the Throne!  
 Oh the shining holinesses  
 Of the thousand, thousand faces  
 God-sunned by the thronèd ONE,  
 And made intense with such a love,  
 That, though I saw them turned above,  
 Each loving seemed for also me!  
 And, oh the Unspeakable, the HE,  
 The manifest in secrecies,  
 Yet of mine own heart partaker  
 With the overcoming look  
 Of One who hath been once forsook,  
 And blesseth the forsaker!  
 Mother, mother, let me go  
 Toward the Face that looketh so!  
 Through the mystic wingèd Four

<sup>1</sup> "For I say unto you that in heaven  
 their angels do always behold the face of my  
 Father which is in heaven."—MATT. xviii.  
 10.

Whose are inward, outward eyes  
 Dark with light of mysteries  
 And the restless evermore  
 "Holy, holy, holy," — through  
 The sevenfold lamps that burn in  
 view  
 Of cherubim and seraphim,  
 Through the four and twenty crowned  
 Stately elders white around,  
 Suffer me to go to Him!

## XXX.

"Is your wisdom very wise,  
 Mother, on the narrow earth,  
 Very happy, very worth  
 That I should stay to learn?  
 Are these air-corrupting sighs  
 Fashioned by unlearned breath?  
 Do the students' lamps that burn  
 All might illumine death?  
 Mother, albeit this be so,  
 Loose thy prayer, and let me go  
 Where that bright chief angel stands,  
 Apart from all his brother bands,  
 Too glad for smiling, having bent  
 In angelic wilderment  
 O'er the depths of God, and brought  
 Reeling thence one only thought  
 To fill his own eternity.  
 He the teacher is for me,  
 He can teach what I would know:  
 Mother, mother, let me go!"

## XXXI.

"Can your poet make an Eden  
 No winter will undo,  
 And light a starry fire, while heed-  
 ing  
 His hearth's is burning too?  
 Drown in music the earth's din,  
 And keep his own wild soul within  
 The law of his own harmony?  
 Mother, albeit this be so,  
 Let me to my heaven go!  
 A little harp me waits thereby, —  
 A harp whose strings are golden all.  
 And tuned to music spherical,  
 Hanging on the green life-tree  
 Where no willows ever be.  
 Shall I miss that harp of mine?  
 Mother, no! the Eye divine  
 Turned upon it makes it shine;  
 And, when I touch it, poems sweet,  
 Like separate souls, shall fly from  
 it,  
 Each to the immortal fyttè.  
 We shall all be poets there,  
 Gazing on the chiefest Fair.

xxxii.

"Love! earth's love! and *can we*  
 love  
 Fixedly where all things move?  
 Can the sinning love each other?  
 Mother, mother,  
 I tremble in thy close embrace;  
 I feel thy tears adown my face:  
 Thy prayers do keep me out of  
 bliss, —  
 Oh dreary earthly love?  
 Loose thy prayer, and let me go  
 To the place which loving is,  
 Yet not sad; and when is given  
 Escape to *thee* from this below,  
 Thou shalt behold me, that I wait  
 For thee beside the happy gate,  
 And silence shall be up in heaven  
 To hear our greeting kiss."

xxxiii.

The nurse awakes in the morning  
 sun,  
 And starts to see beside her bed  
 The lady with a grandeur spread  
 Like pathos o'er her face, as one  
 God-satisfied and earth-undone.  
 The babe upon her arm was dead;  
 And the nurse could utter forth no  
 cry, —  
 She was awed by the calm in the  
 mother's eye.

xxxiv.

"Wake, nurse!" the lady said:  
 "We are waking, — he and I, —  
 I on earth, and he in sky:

And thou must help me to o'erlay  
 With garment white this little clay  
 Which needs no more our lullaby.

xxxv.

"I changed the cruel prayer I made,  
 And bowed my meekened face, and  
 prayed  
 That God would do his will; and  
 thus  
 He did it, nurse! He parted us;  
 And his sun shows victorious  
 The dead calm face, — and *I* am  
 calm,  
 And heaven is harkening a new  
 psalm.

xxxvi.

"This earthly noise is too anear,  
 Too loud, and will not let me hear  
 The little harp. My death will soon  
 Make silence."

And a sense of tune,  
 A satisfied love meanwhile  
 Which nothing earthly could de-  
 spoil,  
 Sang on within her soul.

xxxvii.

Oh you,  
 Earth's tender and impassioned few,  
 Take courage to intrust your love  
 To Him so named, who guards above  
 Its ends, and shall fulfil!  
 Breaking the narrow prayers that  
 may  
 Befit your narrow hearts away  
 In his broad, loving will.

## THE ROMAUNT OF THE PAGE.

I.

A KNIGHT of gallant deeds,  
 And a young page at his side,  
 From the holy war in Palestine  
 Did slow and thoughtful ride,  
 As each were a palmer, and told for  
 beads  
 The dews of the eventide.

II

"O young page," said the knight,  
 "A noble page art thou!  
 Thou fearest not to steep in blood  
 The curls upon thy brow;  
 And once in the tent, and twice in the  
 fight,  
 Didst ward me a mortal blow."

## III.

"O brave knight," said the page,  
 "Or ere we hither came,  
 We talked in tent, we talked in  
 field,  
 Of the bloody battle-game;  
 But here, below this greenwood  
 bough,  
 I cannot speak the same.

## IV.

"Our troop is far behind,  
 The woodland calm is new,  
 Our steeds, with slow grass-muffled  
 hoofs,  
 Tread deep the shadows through;  
 And in my mind some blessing kind  
 Is dropping with the dew.

## V.

"The woodland calm is pure:  
 I cannot choose but have  
 A thought from these o' the beechen-  
 trees  
 Which in our England wave,  
 And of the little finches fine  
 Which sang there while in Palestine  
 The warrior-hilt we drave.

## VI.

"Methinks, a moment gone,  
 I heard my mother pray:  
 I heard, sir knight, the prayer for me  
 Wherein she passed away;  
 And I know the heavens are leaning  
 down  
 To hear what I shall say."

## VII.

The page spake calm and high,  
 As of no mean degree;  
 Perhaps he felt in nature's broad  
 Full heart his own was free:  
 And the knight looked up to his lifted  
 eye,  
 Then answered, smilingly, —

## VIII.

"Sir page, I pray your grace!  
 Certes, I meant not so  
 To cross your pastoral mood, sir  
 page,  
 With the crook of the battle-bow;  
 But a knight may speak of a lady's  
 face,  
 I ween, in any mood or place,  
 If the grasses die or grow.

## IX.

"And this I meant to say, —  
 My lady's face shall shine  
 As ladies' faces use, to greet  
 My page from Palestine:  
 Or speak she fair, or prank she gay,  
 She is no lady of mine.

## X.

"And this I meant to fear, —  
 Her bower may suit thee ill;  
 For, sooth, in that same field and tent  
 Thy *talk* was somewhat still:  
 And fitter thy hand for my knightly  
 spear  
 Than thy tongue for my lady's  
 will."

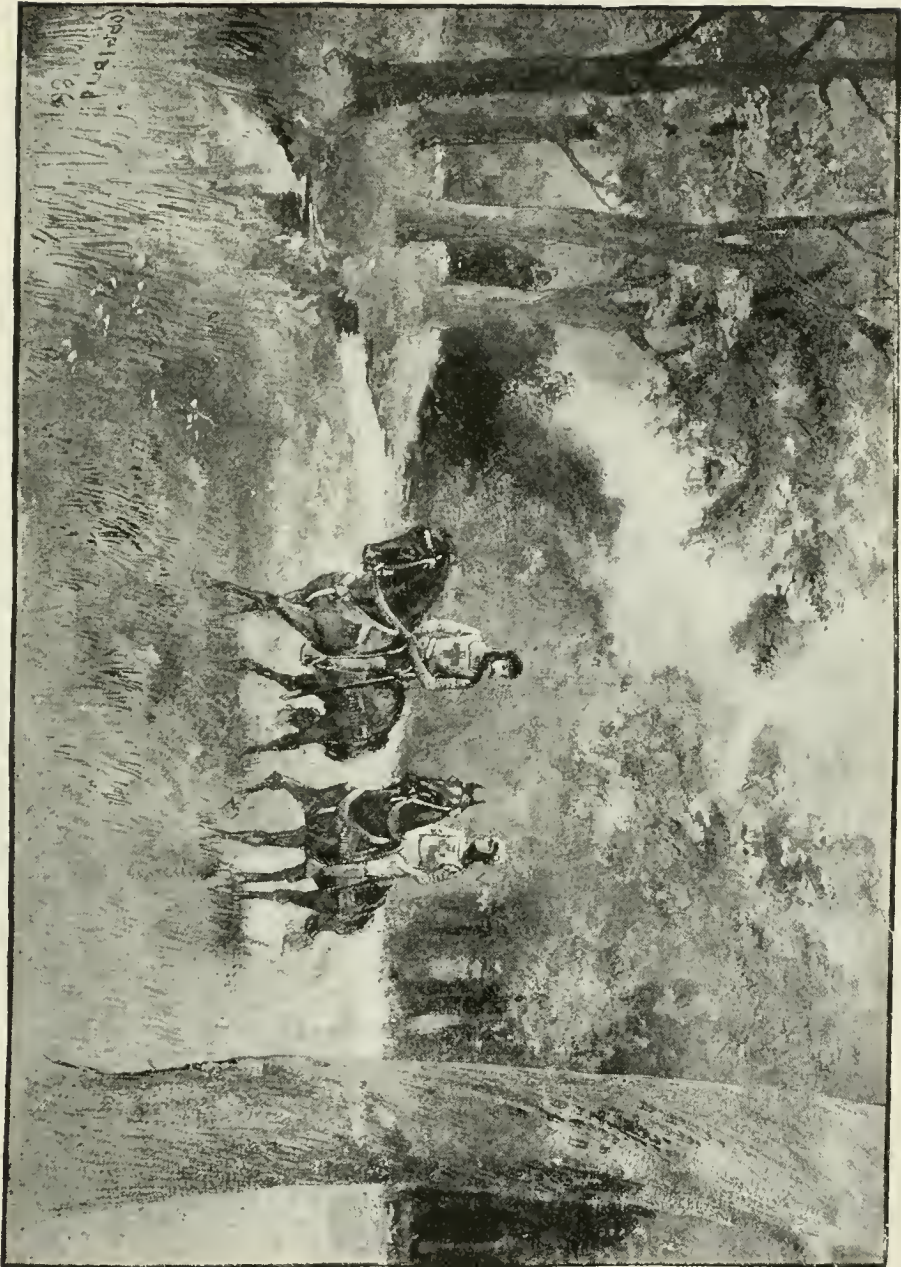
## XI.

Slowly and thankfully  
 The young page bowed his head;  
 His large eyes seemed to muse a smile,  
 Until he blushed instead;  
 And no lady in her bower, pardiè  
 Could blush more sudden red.  
 "Sir knight, thy lady's bower to me  
 Is suited well," he said.

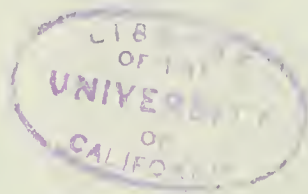
## XII.

*Beati, beati, mortui!*  
 From the convent on the sea,  
 One mile off, or scarce so nigh,  
 Swells the dirge as clear and high  
 As if that, over brake and lea,  
 Bodily the wind did carry  
 The great altar of St. Mary,  
 And the fifty tapers burning o'er  
 it,  
 And the lady abbess dead before  
 it,  
 And the chanting nuns whom yester  
 week  
 Her voice did charge and bless, —  
 Chanting steady, chanting meek,  
 Chanting with a solemn breath,  
 Because that they are thinking less  
 Upon the dead than upon death.  
*Beati, beati, mortui!*  
 Now the vision in the sound  
 Wheeleth on the wind around;  
 Now it sweepeth back, away, —  
 The uplands will not let it stay  
 To dark the western sun:  
*Mortui!* away at last,  
 Or ere the page's blush is past!  
 And the knight heard all, and the  
 page heard none.





“Our steeds, with slow grass-muffled hoofs,  
Tread deep the shadows through.” — Page 278.



## XIII.

"A boon, thou noble knight,  
If ever I servèd thee!  
Though thou art a knight, and I am a  
page,  
Now grant a boon to me;  
And tell me, sooth, if dark or bright  
If little loved, or loved aright,  
Be the face of thy ladye."

## XIV.

Gloomily looked the knight —  
"As a son thou hast servèd me;  
And would to none I had granted  
boon,  
Except to only thee!  
For haply then I should love aright,  
For then I should know if dark or  
bright  
Were the face of my ladye.

## XV.

"Yet it ill suits my knightly tongue  
To grudge that granted boon,  
That heavy price from heart and life  
I paid in silence down;  
The hand that claimed it, cleared in  
fine  
My father's fame: I swear by mine  
That price was nobly won!

## XVI.

"Earl Walter was a brave old earl,  
He was my father's friend;  
And while I rode the lists at court,  
And little guessed the end,  
My noble father in his shroud,  
Against a slanderer lying loud,  
He rose up to defend.

## XVII.

"Oh, calm below the marble gray  
My father's dust was strewn!  
Oh, meek above the marble gray  
His image prayed alone!  
The slanderer lied; the wretch was  
brave —  
For, looking up the minster-nave,  
He saw my father's knightly glaive  
Was changed from steel to stone.

## XVIII.

"Earl Walter's glaive was steel,  
With a brave old hand to wear it,  
And dashed the lie back in the mouth  
Which lied against the godly truth  
And against the knightly merit:

The slanderer, 'neath the avenger's  
heel,  
Struck up the dagger in appeal  
From stealthy lie to brutal force,  
And out upon the traitor's corse  
Was yielded the true spirit.

## XIX.

"I would mine hand had fought that  
fight,  
And justified my father!  
I would mine heart had caught that  
wound,  
And slept beside him rather!  
I think it were a better thing  
Than murdered friend and marriage-  
ring  
Forced on my life together.

## XX.

"Wail shook Earl Walter's house;  
His true wife shed no tear:  
She lay upon her bed as mute  
As the earl did on his bier.  
Till — 'Ride, ride fast,' she said at  
last,  
'And bring the avengèd's son anear!  
Ride fast, ride free, as a dart can  
flee;  
For white of blee with waiting for  
me  
Is the corse in the next chambère.'

## XXI.

"I came, I knelt beside her bed;  
Her calm was worse than strife.  
'My husband, for thy father dear,  
Gave freely, when thou wast not here,  
His own and eke my life.  
A boon! Of that sweet child we  
make  
An orphan for thy father's sake,  
Make thou, for ours, a wife.'

## XXII.

"I said, 'My steed neighs in the  
court,  
My bark rocks on the brine,  
And the warrior's vow I am under  
now  
To free the pilgrim's shrine;  
But fetch the ring, and fetch the  
priest,  
And call that daughter of thine,  
And rule she wide from my castle on  
Nyde  
While I am in Palestine.'

## XXIII.

"In the dark chambère, if the bride  
was fair,  
Ye wis, I could not see;  
But the steed thrice neighed, and the  
priest fast prayed,  
And wedded fast were we.  
Her mother smiled upon her bed,  
As at its side we knelt to wed;  
And the bride rose from her knee,  
And kissed the smile of her mother  
dead,  
Or ever she kissed me.

## XXIV.

"My page, my page, what grieves  
thee so,  
That the tears run down thy face?"—  
"Alas, alas! mine own sister  
Was in thy lady's case:  
But *she* laid down the silks she wore,  
And followed him she wed before,  
Disguised as his true servitor,  
To the very battle-place.'"

## XXV.

And wept the page, but laughed the  
knight,  
A careless laugh laughed he:  
"Well done it were for thy sister,  
But not for my ladye!  
My love, so please you, shall requite  
No woman, whether dark or bright,  
Unwomaned if she be.'"

## XXVI.

The page stopped weeping, and smiled  
cold:  
"Your wisdom may declare  
That womanhood is proved the best  
By golden brooch and glossy vest  
The mincing ladies wear;  
Yet is it proved, and was of old,  
A near as well, I dare to hold,  
By truth, or by despair.'"

## XXVII.

He smiled no more, he wept no more;  
But passionate he spake:  
"Oh, womanly she prayed in tent,  
When none beside did wake!  
Oh, womanly she paled in fight,  
For one beloved's sake!—  
And her little hand, defiled with  
blood,  
Her tender tears of womanhood  
Most woman-pure did make."

## XXVIII.

—"Well done it were for thy sister,  
Thou tellest well her tale;  
But for my lady, she shall pray  
I' the kirk of Nydesdale.  
Not dread for me, but love for me,  
Shall make my lady pale:  
No casque shall hide her woman's  
tear,  
It shall have room to trickle clear  
Behind her woman's veil."

## XXIX.

—"But what if she mistook thy mind,  
And followed thee to strife,  
Then kneeling did entreat thy love,  
As Paynims ask for life?"  
—"I would forgive, and evermore  
Would love her as my servitor,  
But little as my wife.

## XXX.

"Look up! there is a small bright  
cloud  
Alone amid the skies:  
So high, so pure, and so apart,  
A woman's honor lies."  
The page looked up; the cloud was  
sheen:  
A sadder cloud did rush, I ween,  
Betwixt it and his eyes."

## XXXI.

Then dimly dropped his eyes away  
From welkin unto hill.  
Ha! who rides there? the page is  
'ware,  
Though the cry at his heart is still;  
And the page seeth all, and the knight  
seeth none,  
Though banner and spear do fleck the  
sun,  
And the Saracens ride at will.

## XXXII.

He speaketh calm, he speaketh low:  
"Ride fast, my master, ride,  
Or ere within the broadening dark  
The narrow shadows hide."  
"Yea, fast, my page, I will do so,  
And keep thou at my side."

## XXXIII.

"Now nay, now nay, ride on thy way,  
Thy faithful page precede:  
For I must loose on saddle-bow  
My battle-casque that galls, I trow,

The shoulder of my steed;  
And I must pray, as I did vow,  
For one in bitter need.

## XXXIV.

“ Ere night I shall be near to thee,  
Now ride, my master, ride!  
Ere night, as parted spirits cleave  
To mortals too beloved to leave.  
I shall be at thy side.”  
The knight smiled free at the fantasy,  
And adown the dell did ride.

## XXXV.

Had the knight looked up to the  
page's face,  
No smile the word had won:  
Had the knight looked up to the  
page's face,  
I ween he had never gone:  
Had the knight looked back to the  
page's geste,  
I ween he had turned anon,  
For dread was the woe in the face so  
young,  
And wild was the silent geste that  
flung  
Casque, sword, to earth, as the boy  
down sprung  
And stood — alone, alone.

## XXXVI.

He clinched his hands as if to hold  
His soul's great agony —  
“ Have I renounced my womanhood  
For wifhood unto thee,  
And is this the last, last look of thine  
That ever I shall see ?

## XXXVII.

“ Yet God thee save, and mayst thou  
have  
A lady to thy mind,  
More woman-proud, and half as true,  
As one thou leav'st behind!  
And God me take with HIM to dwell,  
For HIM I cannot love too well,  
As I have loved my kind.”

## XXXVIII.

SHE looketh up, in earth's despair,  
The hopeful heavens to seek;  
That little cloud still floateth there,  
Whereof her loved did speak:  
How bright the little cloud appears!  
Her eyelids fall upon the tears,  
And the tears down either cheek.

## XXXIX.

The tramp of hoof, the flash of steel —  
The Paynims round her coming!  
The sound and sight have made her  
calm. —  
False page, but truthful woman;  
She stands amid them all unmoved:  
A heart once broken by the loved  
Is strong to meet the foeman.

## XL.

“ Ho, Christian page! art keeping  
sheep,  
From pouring wine-cups rest-  
ing ? ” —  
“ I keep my master's noble name  
For warring, not for feasting;  
And if that here Sir Hubert were,  
My master brave, my master dear,  
Ye would not stay the questing.”

## XLI.

“ Where is thy master, scornful page,  
That we may slay or bind him ? ” —  
“ Now search the lea, and search the  
wood,  
And see if ye can find him!  
Nathless, as hath been often tried,  
Your Paynim heroes faster ride  
Before him than behind him.”

## XLII.

“ Give smoother answers, lying page,  
Or perish in the lying ! ” —  
“ I trow that if the warrior brand  
Beside my foot were in my hand,  
'Twere better at replying ! ”  
They cursed her deep, they smote her  
low,  
They cleft her golden ringlets through:  
The Loving is the Dying.

## XLIII.

She felt the emiter gleam down,  
And met it from beneath  
With smile more bright in victory  
Than any sword from sheath,  
Which flashed across her lip serene,  
Most like the spirit-light between  
The darks of life and death.

## XLIV.

*Ingemisco, ingemisco!*  
From the convent on the sea,  
Now it sweepeth solemnly,  
As over wood and over lea

Bodily the wind did carry  
 The great altar of St. Mary,  
 And the fifty tapers paling o'er it,  
 And the lady abbess stark before  
 it,  
 And the weary nuns with hearts that  
 faintly  
 Beat along their voices saintly —  
*Ingemisco, ingemisco!*

Dirge for abbess laid in shroud  
 Sweepeth o'er the shroudless dead,  
 Page or lady, as we said,  
 With the dew upon her head,  
 All as sad if not as loud.  
*Ingemisco, ingemisco!*  
 Is ever a lament begun  
 By any mourner under sun,  
 Which, ere it endeth, suits but *one?*

## THE LAY OF THE BROWN ROSARY.

### FIRST PART.

I.

"ONORA, Onora!" her mother is calling;  
 She sits at the lattice and hears the  
 dew falling  
 Drop after drop from the sycamores  
 laden  
 With dew as with blossom, and calls  
 home the maiden:  
 "Night cometh, Onora!"

II.

She looks down the garden-walk caverned  
 with trees,  
 To the limes at the end where the  
 green arbor is:  
 "Some sweet thought or other may  
 keep where it found her,  
 While, forgot or unseen in the dream-  
 light around her,  
 Night cometh — Onora!"

III.

She looks up the forest whose alleys  
 shoot on  
 Like the mute minster-aisles when  
 the anthem is done,  
 And the choristers, sitting with faces  
 aslant,  
 Feel the silence to consecrate more  
 than the chant —  
 "Onora, Onora!"

IV.

And forward she looketh across the  
 brown heath —  
 "Onora, art coming?" What is it  
 she seeth?  
 Nought, nought but the gray border-  
 stone that is wist  
 To dilate, and assume a wild shape in  
 mist —  
 "My daughter!" Then over

V.

The casement she leaneth, and as she  
 doth so  
 She is 'ware of her little son playing  
 below:  
 "Now where is Onora?" He hung  
 down his head  
 And spake not, then answering  
 blushed scarlet red, —  
 "At the tryst with her lover."

VI.

But his mother was wroth: in a stern-  
 ness quoth she,  
 "As thou play'st at the ball art thou  
 playing with me,  
 When we know that her lover to bat-  
 tle is gone,  
 And the saints know above that she  
 loveth but one,  
 And will ne'er wed another?"

## VII.

Then the boy wept aloud: 'twas a fair sight, yet sad,  
To see the tears run down the sweet blooms he had.  
He stamped with his foot, said, "The saints know I lied  
Because truth that is wicked is fittest to hide:  
Must I utter it, mother?"

## VIII.

In his vehement childhood he hurried within,  
And knelt at her feet as in prayer against sin;  
But a child at a prayer never sobbeth as he —  
"Oh! she sits with the nun of the brown rosary,  
At nights in the ruin —

## IX.

"The old convent ruin the ivy rots off,  
Where the owl hoots by day, and the toad is sun-proof,  
Where no singing-birds build, and the trees gaunt and gray  
As in stormy seacoasts appear blasted one way, —  
But is *this* the wind's doing?

## X.

"A nun in the east wall was buried alive,  
Who mocked at the priest when he called her to shrive,  
And shrieked such a curse as the stone took her breath,  
The old abbess fell backwards, and swooned unto death,  
With an Ave half spoken.

## XI.

"I tried once to pass it, myself and my hound,  
Till, as fearing the lash, down he shivered to ground:  
A brave hound, my mother! a brave hound, ye wot!  
And the wolf thought the same with his fangs at her throat  
In the pass of the Brocken.

## XII.

"At dawn and at eve, mother, who sitteth there  
With the brown rosary never used for a prayer?  
Stoop low, mother, low! If we went there to see,  
What an ugly great hole in that east wall must be  
At dawn and at even!

## XIII.

"Who meet there, my mother, at dawn and at even?  
Who meet by that wall, never looking to heaven?  
O sweetest my sister! what doeth with *thee*  
The ghost of a nun with a brown rosary,  
And a face turned from heaven?

## XIV.

"St. Agnes o'erwatcheth my dreams, and erewhile  
I have felt through mine eyelids the warmth of her smile;  
But last night, as a sadness like pity came o'er her,  
She whispered, 'Say *two* prayers at dawn for Onora:  
The Tempted is sinning.'

## XV.

"Onora, Onora!" They heard her not coming,  
Not a step on the grass, not a voice through the gloaming;  
But her mother looked up, and she stood on the floor,  
Fair and still as the moonlight that came there before,  
And a smile just beginning.

## XVI.

It touches her lips, but it dares not arise  
To the height of the mystical sphere of her eyes;  
And the large musing eyes, neither joyous nor sorry,  
Sing on like the angels in separate glory  
Between clouds of amber.

## XVII.

For the hair droops in clouds amber-colored till stirred  
 Into gold by the gesture that comes with a word;  
 While — oh soft! — her speaking is so interwound  
 Of the dim and the sweet, 'tis a twilight of sound,  
 And floats through the chamber.

## XVIII.

“Since thou shrivest my brother, fair mother,” said she,  
 “I count on thy priesthood for marrying of me;  
 And I know by the hills that the battle is done,  
 That my lover rides on, will be here with the sun,  
 'Neath the eyes that behold thee.”

## XIX.

Her mother sate silent, too tender, I wis,  
 Of the smile her dead father smiled dying to kiss:  
 But the boy started up pale with tears, passion-wrought, —  
 “Oh wicked fair sister! the hills utter nought;  
 If he cometh, who told thee?”

## XX.

“I know by the hills,” she resumed calm and clear,  
 “By the beauty upon them, that HE is anear:  
 Did they ever look so since he bade me adieu?  
 Oh, love in the waking, sweet brother, is true  
 As St. Agnes in sleeping!”

## XXI.

Half ashamed and half softened, the boy did not speak,  
 And the blush met the lashes which fell on his cheek.  
 She bowed down to kiss him: dear saints, did he see  
 Or feel on her bosom the BROWN ROSARY,  
 That he shrank away weeping?

## SECOND PART.

*A bed.* ONORA sleeping. Angels, but not near.

*First Angel.*  
 Must we stand so far, and she So very fair?

*Second Angel.*  
 As bodies be.

*First Angel.*  
 And she so mild?

*Second Angel.*  
 As spirits when They meeken, not to God, but men.

*First Angel.*  
 And she so young, that I who bring Good dreams for saintly children, might

Mistake that small soft face to-night,  
 And fetch her such a blessed thing,  
 That at her waking she would weep  
 For childhood lost anew in sleep.  
 How hath she sinned?

*Second Angel.*  
 In bartering love, — God's love for man's.

*First Angel.*  
 We may reprove The world for this, not only her.  
 Let me approach to breathe away  
 This dust o' the heart with holy air.

*Second Angel.*  
 Stand off! She sleeps, and did not pray.

*First Angel.*  
 Did none pray for her?

*Second Angel.*  
 Ay, a child,  
 Who never, praying, wept before:  
 While in a mother undefiled  
 Prayer goeth on in sleep, as true  
 And pauseless as the pulses do.

*First Angel.*  
 Then I approach.

*Second Angel.*  
 It is not WILLED.  
*First Angel.*  
 Onè word: is she redeemed?

*Second Angel.*  
 No more!  
 The place is filled. [Angels vanish.  
*Evil Spirit in a nun's garb by the bed.*  
 Forbear that dream, forbear that  
 dream! too near to heaven it  
 leaned.

*Onora in sleep.*  
 Nay, leave me this, — but only this!  
 'tis but a dream, sweet fiend.



*Evil Spirit,*  
It is a thought.

*Onora in sleep.*

A sleeping thought, most innocent of good:

It doth the Devil no harm, sweet fiend: it cannot if it would.

I say in it no holy hymn, I do no holy work,

I scarcely hear the sabbath-bell that chimeth from the kirk.

*Evil Spirit.*

Forbear that dream, forbear that dream!

*Onora in sleep.*

Nay, let me dream at least. That far-off bell, it may be took for viol at a feast:

I only walk among the fields beneath the autumn sun,

With my dead father, hand in hand, as I have often done.

*Evil Spirit.*

Forbear that dream, forbear that dream!

*Onora in sleep.*

Nay, sweet fiend, let me go: I nevermore can walk with *him*, oh, nevermore but so!

For they have tied my father's feet beneath the kirkyard stone:

Oh, deep and straight, oh, very straight, they move at nights alone;

And then he calleth through my dreams, he calleth tenderly,

"Come forth, my daughter, my beloved, and walk the fields with me!"

*Evil Spirit.*

Forbear that dream, or else disprove its pureness by a sign.

*Onora in sleep.*

Speak on, thou shalt be satisfied: my word shall answer thine.

I heard a bird which used to sing when I a child was praying,

I see the poppies in the corn I used to sport away in:

What shall I do,—tread down the dew, and pull the blossoms blowing?

Or clap my wicked hands to fright the finches from the rowen?

*Evil Spirit.*

Thou shalt do something harder still. Stand up where thou dost stand,

Among the fields of Dreamland, with thy father hand in hand,

And clear and slow repeat the vow, declare its cause and kind, Which not to break, in sleep or wake, thou bearest on thy mind.

*Onora in sleep.*

I bear a vow of sinful kind, a vow for mournful cause;

I vowed it deep, I vowed it strong; the spirits laughed applause;

The spirits trailed along the pines low laughter like a breeze,

While, high atween their swinging tops, the stars appeared to freeze.

*Evil Spirit.*

More calm and free, speak out to me why such a vow was made.

*Onora in sleep.*

Because that God decreed my death, and I shrank back afraid.

Have patience, O dead father mine! I did not fear to die.

I wish I were a young dead child, and had thy company!

I wish I lay beside thy feet, a buried three-year child,

And wearing only a kiss of thine upon my lips that smiled!

The linden-tree that covers thee might so have shadowed twain;

For death itself I did not fear—'tis love that makes the pain:

Love feareth death. I was no child; I was betrothed that day;

I wore a troth-kiss on my lips I could not give away.

How could I bear to lie content and still beneath a stone,

And feel mine own betrothed go by—alas! no more mine own—

Go leading by in wedding pomp some lovely lady brave,

With cheeks that blushed as red as rose, while mine were white in grave?

How could I bear to sit in heaven, on e'er so high a throne,

And hear him say to her—to *her*, that else he loveth none?

Though e'er so high I sate above, though e'er so low he spake,

As clear as thunder I should hear the new oath he might take,

That hers, forsooth, were heavenly eyes—ah me, while very dim

Some heavenly eyes (indeed of heaven!) would darken down to *him*!

*Evil Spirit.*  
Who told thee thou wast called to  
death?

*Onora in sleep.*

I sate all night beside thee:  
The gray owl on the ruined wall shut  
both his eyes to hide thee,  
And ever he flapped his heavy wing  
all brokenly and weak,  
And the long grass waved against the  
sky, around his gasping beak.

I sate beside thee all the night, while  
the moonlight lay forlorn  
Strewn round us like a dead world's  
shroud in ghastly fragments  
torn;

And through the night, and through  
the hush, and over the flapping  
wing,

We heard beside the heavenly gate  
the angels murmuring.

We heard them say, "Put day to day,  
and count the days to seven,

And God will draw Onora up the  
golden stairs of heaven:

And yet the evil ones have leave  
that purpose to defer;

For if she has no need of HIM, He  
has no need of her."

*Evil Spirit.*

Speak out to me, speak bold and free.

*Onora in sleep.*

And then I heard thee say,  
"I count upon my rosary brown the  
hours thou hast to stay;

Yet God permits us evil ones to put  
by that decree,

Since, if thou hast no need of HIM,  
He has no need of thee:

And, if thou wilt forego the sight of  
angels, verily

Thy true love gazing on thy face  
shall guess what angels be;

Nor bride shall pass, save thee" . . .

Alas! my father's hand's a-  
cold,

The meadows seem . . .

*Evil Spirit.*

Forbear the dream, or let the vow be  
told.

*Onora in sleep.*

I vowed upon thy rosary brown, this  
string of antique beads,

By charnel lichens overgrown, and  
dank among the weeds,

This rosary brown which is thine  
own, — lost soul of buried nun!

Who, lost by vow, wouldst render  
now all souls alike undone, —

I vowed upon thy rosary brown, —  
and, till such vow should break,  
A pledge always of living days 'twas  
hung around my neck, —

I vowed to thee on rosary (dead  
father, look not so!)

*I would not thank God in my weal, nor  
seek God in my woe.*

*Evil Spirit.*

And canst thou prove . . .

*Onora in sleep.*

O love, my love! I felt him near again!

I saw his steed on mountain-head, I  
heard it on the plain:

Was this no weal for me to feel? Is  
greater weal than this?

Yet when he came I wept his name  
— and the angels heard but *his*.

*Evil Spirit.*

Well done, well done!

*Onora in sleep.*

Ah me, the sun! the dreamlight 'gins  
to pine, —

Ah me, how dread can look the dead!  
Aroynt thee, father mine!

She starteth from slumber, she sitteth  
upright,

And her breath comes in sobs, while  
she stares through the night.

There is nought; the great willow,  
her lattice before,

Large-drawn in the moon, lieth calm  
on the floor;

But her hands tremble fast as their  
pulses, and, free

From the death-clasp, close over —  
the BROWN ROSARY.

### THIRD PART.

I.

'Tis a morn for a bridal: the merry  
bride-bell

Rings clear through the greenwood  
that skirts the chapelle,

And the priest at the altar awaiteth  
the bride,

And the sacristans slyly are jesting  
aside

At the work shall be doing;

II.

While down through the wood rides  
that fair company,

The youths with the courtship, the  
maids with the glee,

Till the chapel-cross opens to sight,  
and at once  
All the maids sigh demurely, and  
think for the nonce,  
“And so endeth a wooing!”

## III.

And the bride and the bridegroom  
are leading the way,  
With his hand on her rein, and a  
word yet to say:  
Her dropt eyelids suggest the soft  
answers beneath,  
And the little quick smiles come and  
go with her breath  
When she sigheth or speaketh.

## IV.

And the tender bride-mother breaks  
off unware  
From an Ave, to think that her  
daughter is fair,  
Till in nearing the chapel, and glanc-  
ing before,  
She seeth her little son stand at the  
door:  
Is it play that he seeketh?

## V.

Is it play when his eyes wander inno-  
cent-wild,  
And sublimed with a sadness unfitting  
a child?  
He trembles not, weeps not: the pas-  
sion is done,  
And calmly he kneels in their midst,  
with the sun  
On his head like a glory.

## VI.

“O fair-featured maids, ye are  
many!” he cried,  
“But in fairness and vileness who  
matcheth the bride?  
O brave-hearted youths, ye are many!  
but whom  
For the courage and woe can ye match  
with the groom  
As ye see them before ye?”

## VII.

Out spake the bride's mother, “The  
vileness is thine,  
If thou shame thine own sister, a  
bride at the shrine!”

Out spake the bride's lover, “The  
vileness be mine,  
If he shame mine own wife at the  
hearth or the shrine,  
And the charge be improvèd!”

## VIII.

“Bring the charge, prove the charge,  
brother! speak it aloud:  
Let thy father and hers hear it deep  
in his shroud!”  
— “O father, thou seest, for dead eyes  
can see,  
How she wears on her bosom a BROWN  
ROSARY,  
O my father beloved!”

## IX.

Then outlaughed the bridegroom, and  
outlaughed withal  
Both maidens and youths by the old  
chapel-wall;  
“So she weareth no love-gift, kind  
brother,” quoth he,  
“She may wear, an she listeth, a  
brown rosary,  
Like a pure-hearted lady.”

## X.

Then swept through the chapel the  
long bridal train;  
Though he spake to the bride, she  
replied not again.  
On, as one in a dream, pale and state-  
ly she went  
Where the altar-lights burn o'er the  
great sacrament,  
Faint with daylight, but steady.

## XI.

But her brother had passed in be-  
tween them and her,  
And calmly knelt down on the high  
altar-stair —  
Of an infantine aspect so stern to the  
view  
That the priest could not smile on the  
child's eyes of blue  
As he would for another.

## XII.

He knelt like a child, marble-sculp-  
tured and white,  
That seems kneeling to pray on the  
tomb of a knight,

With a look taken up to each iris of  
stone  
From the greatness and death where  
he kneeleth, but none  
From the face of a mother.

## XIII.

"In your chapel, O priest! ye have  
wedded and shriven  
Fair wives for the hearth, and fair  
sinners for heaven;  
But this fairest, my sister, ye think  
now to wed,  
Bid her kneel where she standeth,  
and shrive her instead:  
Oh, shrive her, and wed not!"

## XIV

In tears, the bride's mother, "Sir  
priest, unto thee  
Would he lie, as he lied to this fair  
company."  
In wrath, the bride's lover, "The lie  
shall be clear! —  
Speak it out, boy! the saints in their  
niches shall hear:  
Be the charge proved, or said  
not!"

## XV.

Then, serene in his childhood, he  
lifted his face,  
And his voice sounded holy, and fit  
for the place,  
"Look down from your niches, ye  
still saints, and see  
How she wears on her bosom a BROWN  
ROSARY!  
Is it used for the praying?"

## XVI.

The youths looked aside, — to laugh  
there were a sin, —  
And the maidens' lips trembled from  
smiles shut within:  
Quoth the priest, "Thou art wild,  
pretty boy! Blessed she  
Who prefers at her bridal a brown  
rosary  
To a worldly arraying."

## XVII

The bridegroom spake low, and led  
onward the bride,  
And before the high altar they stood  
side by side;

The rite-book is opened, the rite is  
begun;  
They have knelt down together to rise  
up as one.  
Who laughed by the altar?

## XVIII.

The maidens looked forward, the  
youths looked around,  
The bridegroom's eye flashed from his  
prayer at the sound;  
And each saw the bride, as if no bride  
she were,  
Gazing cold at the priest without ges-  
ture of prayer,  
As he read from the psalter.

## XIX.

The priest never knew that she did so,  
but still  
He felt a power on him too strong for  
his will;  
And whenever the Great Name was  
there to be read,  
His voice sank to silence; THAT could  
not be said,  
Or the air could not hold it.

## XX.

"I have sinnèd," quoth he: "I have  
sinnèd, I wot;"  
And the tears ran adown his old  
cheeks at the thought:  
They dropped fast on the book; but  
he read on the same,  
And aye was the silence where should  
be the NAME,  
As the choristers told it.

## XXI.

The rite-book is closed; and, the rite  
being done,  
They who knelt down together arise  
up as one:  
Fair riseth the bride — oh, a fair  
bride is she!  
But, for all (think the maidens) that  
brown rosary,  
No saint at her praying!

## XXII.

What aileth the bridegroom? He  
glares blank and wide,  
Then, suddenly turning, he kisseth  
the bride:

His lips stung her with cold; she  
glanced upwardly mute:  
"Mine own wife," he said, and fell  
stark at her foot  
In the word he was saying.

## XXIII.

They have lifted him up; but his head  
sinks away,  
And his face showeth bleak in the  
sunshine and gray.  
Leave him now where he lieth; for  
oh, nevermore  
Will he kneel at an altar, or stand on  
a floor!  
Let his bride gaze upon him.

## XXIV.

Long and still was her gaze, while  
they chafed him there,  
And breathed in the mouth whose last  
life had kissed her.  
But when they stood up — only *they!*  
with a start  
The shriek from her soul struck her  
pale lips apart:  
She has lived, and forgone him!

## XXV.

And low on his body she droppeth  
adown.  
"Didst call me thine own wife, be-  
loved, thine own?  
Then take thine own with thee! thy  
coldness is warm  
To the world's cold without thee!  
Come, keep me from harm  
In a calm of thy teaching."

## XXVI.

She looked in his face earnest-long,  
as in sooth  
There were hope of an answer, and  
then kissed his mouth,  
And with head on his bosom wept,  
wept bitterly, —  
"Now, O God, take pity — take pity  
on me!  
God, hear my beseeching!"

## XXVII.

She was 'ware of a shadow that  
crossed where she lay;  
She was 'ware of a presence that  
withered the day:

Wild she sprang to her feet, "I sur-  
render to *thee*  
The broken vow's pledge, the ac-  
cursed rosary, —  
I am ready for dying!"

## XXVIII.

She dashed it in scorn to the marhle-  
paved ground,  
Where it fell mute as snow, and a  
weird music-sound  
Crept up, like a chill, up the aisles  
long and dim,  
As the fiends tried to mock at the  
choristers' hymn  
And moaned in the trying.

## FOURTH PART.

ONORA looketh listlessly adown the  
garden-walk:

"I am weary, O my mother, of thy  
tender talk.

I am weary of the trees a-waving to  
and fro,

Of the steadfast skies above, the run-  
ning brooks below.

All things are the same but I, — only  
I am dreary,

And, mother, of my dreariness behold  
me very weary.

"Mother, brother, pull the flowers  
I planted in the spring,

And smiled to think I should smile  
more upon their gathering:

The bees will find out other flowers  
—oh, pull them, dearest mine,

And carry them and carry me before  
St. Agnes' shrine."

—Whereat they pulled the summer  
flowers she planted in the  
spring,

And her and them all mourfully to  
Agnes' shrine did bring.

She looked up to the pictured saint,  
and gently shook her head:

"The picture is too calm for *me* — too  
calm for *me*," she said.

"The little flowers we brought with  
us, before it we may lay,

For those are used to look at heaven;  
but *I* must turn away:

Because no sinner under sun can dare  
or bear to gaze

On God's or angel's holiness, except  
in Jesu's face."

She spoke with passion after pause:  
 "And were it wisely done  
 If we who cannot gaze above should  
 walk the earth alone?  
 If we whose virtue is so weak should  
 have a will so strong,  
 And stand blind on the rocks to  
 choose the right path from the  
 wrong?  
 To choose perhaps a love-lit hearth,  
 instead of love and heaven,—  
 A single rose for a rose-tree which  
 beareth seven times seven?  
 A rose that droppeth from the hand,  
 that fadeth in the breast,  
 Until, in grieving for the worst, we  
 learn what is the best!"

Then breaking into tears: "Dear  
 God," she cried, "and must we  
 see  
 All blissful things depart from us or  
 ere we go to THEE?  
 We cannot guess thee in the wood, or  
 hear thee in the wind?  
 Our cedars must fall round us ere we  
 see the light behind?"

Ay sooth, we feel too strong in weal  
 to need thee on that road;  
 But, woe being come, the soul is dumb  
 that crieth not on 'God.'"

Her mother could not speak for tears:  
 she ever musèd thus,  
 "The bees will find out other flowers—  
 but what is left for us?"  
 But her young brother stayed his  
 sobs, and knelt beside her knee,  
 — "Thou sweetest sister in the world,  
 hast never a word for me?"  
 She passed her hand across his face,  
 she pressed in on his cheek,  
 So tenderly, so tenderly, she needed  
 not to speak.

The wreath which lay on shrine that  
 day, at vespers bloomed no  
 more.  
 The woman fair who placed it there  
 had died an hour before.  
 Both perished mute for lack of root  
 earth's nourishment to reach.  
 O reader, breathe (the ballad saith)  
 some sweetness out of each!

## A ROMANCE OF THE GANGES.

### I.

SEVEN maidens 'neath the midnight  
 Stand near the river-sea,  
 Whose water sweepeth white around  
 The shadow of the tree.  
 The moon and earth are face to face,  
 And earth is slumbering deep;  
 The wave-voice seems the voice of  
 dreams  
 That wander through her sleep.  
 The river floweth on.

### II.

What bring they 'neath the mid-  
 night,  
 Beside the river-sea?  
 They bring the human heart wherein  
 No nightly calm can be;

That droppeth never with the wind,  
 Nor drieth with the dew:  
 Oh, calm it, God! thy calm is broad  
 To cover spirits too.  
 The river floweth on.

### III.

The maidens lean them over  
 The waters, side by side,  
 And shun each other's deepening  
 eyes,  
 And gaze adown the tide;  
 For each within a little boat  
 A little lamp hath put,  
 And heaped for freight some lily's  
 weight,  
 Or scarlet rose half shut.  
 The river floweth on.

## IV.

Of shell of cocoa carven  
 Each little boat is made:  
 Each carries a lamp, and carries a  
 flower,  
 And carries a hope unsaid;  
 And when the boat hath carried the  
 lamp  
 Unquenched till out of sight,  
 The maiden is sure that love will en-  
 dure;  
 But love will fail with light.  
 The river floweth on.

## V.

Why, all the stars are ready  
 To symbolize the soul, —  
 The stars untroubled by the wind,  
 Unwearing as they roll;  
 And yet the soul by instinct sad  
 Reverts to symbols low, —  
 To that small flame whose very name  
 Breathed o'er it, shakes it so.  
 The river floweth on.

## VI.

Six boats are on the river,  
 Seven maidens on the shore,  
 While still above them steadfastly  
 The stars shine evermore.  
 Go, little boats, go soft and safe,  
 And guard the symbol spark!  
 The boats aright go safe and bright  
 Across the waters dark.  
 The river floweth on.

## VII.

The maiden Luti watcheth  
 Where onwardly they float:  
 That look in her dilating eyes  
 Might seem to drive her boat:  
 Her eyes still mark the constant fire,  
 And kindling unawares  
 That hopeful while, she lets a smile  
 Creep silent through her prayers.  
 The river floweth on.

## VIII.

The smile — where hath it wandered?  
 She riseth from her knee,  
 She holds her dark, wet locks away —  
 There is no light to see!  
 She cries a quick and bitter cry —  
 "Nuleeni, launch me thine!  
 We must have light abroad to-night,  
 For all the wreck of mine."  
 The river floweth on.

## IX.

"I do remember watching  
 Beside this river-bed  
 When on my ehildish knee was leaned  
 My dying father's head:  
 I turned mine own to keep the tears  
 From falling on his face:  
 What doth it prove when Death and  
 Love  
 Choose out the selfsame place?"  
 The river floweth on.

## X.

"They say the dead are joyful  
 The death-change here receiving:  
 Who say — ah me! who dare to say  
 Where joy comes to the living?  
 Thy boat, Nuleeni! look not sad —  
 Light up the waters rather!  
 I weep no faithless lover where  
 I wept a loving father."  
 The river floweth on.

## XI.

"My heart foretold his falsehood  
 Ere my little boat grew dim;  
 And though I closed mine eyes to  
 dream  
 That one last dream of *him*,  
 They shall not now be wet to see  
 The shining vision go:  
 From earth's cold love I look above  
 To the holy house of snow."<sup>1</sup>  
 The river floweth on.

## XII.

"Come thou — thou never knewest  
 A grief that thou shouldst fear  
 one!  
 Thou wearest still the happy look  
 That shines beneath a dear one:  
 Thy humming-bird is in the sun,<sup>2</sup>  
 Thy cuckoo in the grove,  
 And all the three broad worlds for  
 thee  
 Are full of wandering love."  
 The river floweth on.

<sup>1</sup> The Hindoo heaven is localized on the summit of Mount Meru, one of the mountains of Himalaya or Himmaleh, which signifies, I believe, in Sanscrit, the abode of snow, winter, or coldness.

<sup>2</sup> Himadeva, the Indian god of love, is imagined to wander through the three worlds, accompanied by the humming-bird, cuckoo, and gentle breezes.

## XIII.

“Why, maiden, dost thou loiter?  
 What secret wouldst thou cover?  
 That peepul cannot hide thy boat,  
 And I can guess thy lover;  
 I heard thee sob his name in sleep,  
 It was a name I knew:  
 Come, little maid, be not afraid,  
 But let us prove him true!”  
 The river floweth on.

## XIV.

The little maiden cometh,  
 She cometh shy and slow;  
 I ween she seeth through her lids,  
 They drop adown so low:  
 Her tresses meet her small bare feet,  
 She stands, and speaketh nought,  
 Yet blusseth red as if she said  
 The name she only thought.  
 The river floweth on.

## XV.

She knelt beside the water,  
 She lighted up the flame,  
 And o'er her youthful forehead's calm  
 The fitful radiance came:  
 “Go, little boat, go soft and safe,  
 And guard the symbol spark!”  
 Soft, safe doth float the little boat  
 Across the waters dark.  
 The river floweth on.

## XVI.

Glad tears her eyes have blinded,  
 The light they cannot reach;  
 She turneth with that sudden smile  
 She learnt before her speech.  
 “I do not hear his voice, the tears  
 Have dimmed my light away;  
 But the symbol light will last to-  
 night,  
 The love will last for aye!”  
 The river floweth on.

## XVII.

Then Luti spake behind her,  
 Out spake she bitterly:  
 “By the symbol light that lasts to-  
 night  
 Wilt vow a vow to me?”  
 Nuleeni gazeth up her face,  
 Soft answer maketh she:  
 “By loves that last when lights are  
 past  
 I vow that vow to thee.”  
 The river floweth on.

## XVIII.

An earthly look had Luti,  
 Though her voice was deep as  
 prayer:  
 “The rice is gathered from the plains  
 To cast upon thine hair;<sup>1</sup>  
 But when *he* comes his marriage-band  
 Around thy neck to throw,  
 Thy bride-smile raise to meet his  
 gaze,  
 And whisper, *There is one betrays,*  
*While Luti suffers woe.*”  
 The river floweth on.

## XIX.

“And when, in seasons after,  
 Thy little bright-faced son  
 Shall lean against thy knee, and ask  
 What deeds his sire hath done,  
 Press deeper down thy mother-smile  
 His glossy curls among,  
 View deep his pretty childish eyes,  
 And whisper, *There is none denies,*  
*While Luti speaks of wrong.*  
 The river floweth on.

## XX.

Nuleeni looked in wonder,  
 Yet softly answered she:  
 “By loves that last when lights are  
 past  
 I vowed that vow to thee.  
 But why glads it thee that a bride-day  
 be  
 By a word of *woe* defiled?  
 That a word of *wrong* take the cradle-  
 song  
 From the ear of a sinless child?” —  
 “Why?” Luti said, and her laugh  
 was dread,  
 And her eyes dilated wild —  
 “That the fair new love may her  
 bridegroom prove,  
 And the father shame the child!”  
 The river floweth on.

## XXI.

“Thou flowest still, O river,  
 Thou flowest 'neath the moon;  
 Thy lily hath not changed a leaf,<sup>2</sup>  
 Thy charmed lute a tune:

<sup>1</sup> The casting of rice upon the head, and the fixing of the band or tali about the neck, are parts of the Hindoo marriage ceremonial.

<sup>2</sup> The Ganges is represented as a white woman, with a water-lily in her right hand, and in her left a lute.



He mixed his voice with thine, and  
*his*  
 Was all I heard around;  
 But now, beside his chosen bride,  
 I hear the river's sound."  
 The river floweth on.

XXII.

"I gaze upon her beauty  
 Through the tresses that inwreath  
 it:  
 The light above thy wave is hers,  
 My rest alone beneath it:  
 Oh, give me back the dying look  
 My father gave thy water!

Give back — and let a little love  
 O'erwatch his weary daughter!  
 The river floweth on.

XXIII.

"Give back!" she hath departed,  
 The word is wandering with her;  
 And the stricken maidens hear afar  
 The step and cry together.  
 Frail symbols? None are frail enow  
 For mortal joys to borrow!  
 While bright doth float Nuleeni's  
 boat,  
 She weepeth dark with sorrow.  
 The river floweth on.

## RHYME OF THE DUCHESS MAY.

I.

To the belfry, one by one, went the  
 ringers from the sun,  
 (*Toll slowly*)  
 And the oldest ringer said, "Ours is  
 music for the dead  
 When the rebees are all done."

II.

Six abeles i' the churehyard grow on  
 the north side in a row,  
 (*Toll slowly*)  
 And the shadows of their tops rock  
 across the little slopes  
 Of the grassy graves below.

III.

On the south side and the west a  
 small river runs in haste,  
 (*Toll slowly*)  
 And, between the river flowing and  
 the fair green trees a-growing,  
 Do the dead lie at their rest.

IV.

On the east I sate that day, up against  
 a willow gray,  
 (*Toll slowly*)  
 Through the rain of willow-branches  
 I could see the low hill-ranges,  
 And the river on its way.

V.

There I sate beneath the tree, and the  
 bell tolled solemnly,  
 (*Toll slowly*)  
 While the trees' and river's voices  
 flowed between the solemn  
 noises, —  
 Yet death seemed more loud to  
 me.

VI.

There I read this ancient rhyme while  
 the bell did all the time  
 (*Toll slowly*)  
 And the solemn knell fell in with the  
 tale of life and sin,  
 Like a rhythmic fate sublime.

### THE RHYME.

I.

Broad the forests stood (I read) on the  
 hills of Linteged;  
 (*Toll slowly*)  
 And three hundred years had stood  
 mute adown each hoary wood,  
 Like a full heart having prayed.

## II.

And the little birds sang east, and the  
 little birds sang west;  
*(Toll slowly)*  
 And but little thought was theirs of  
 the silent antique years,  
 In the building of their nest.

## III.

Down the sun dropt large and red on  
 the towers of Linteged, —  
*(Toll slowly)*  
 Lance and spear upon the height,  
 bristling strange in fiery light,  
 While the castle stood in shade.

## IV.

There the castle stood up black with  
 the red sun at its back,  
*(Toll slowly)*  
 Like a sullen, smouldering pyre with  
 a top that flickers fire  
 When the wind is on its track.

## V.

And five hundred archers tall did be-  
 siege the castle wall,  
*(Toll slowly)*  
 And the castle, seethed in blood, four-  
 teen days and nights had stood  
 And to-night was near its fall.

## VI.

Yet thereunto, blind to doom, three  
 months since, a bride did come,  
*(Toll slowly)*  
 One who proudly trod the floors, and  
 softly whispered in the doors,  
 "May good angels bless our home."

## VII.

Oh, a bride of queenly eyes, with a  
 front of constancies,  
*(Toll slowly)*  
 Oh, a bride of cordial mouth where  
 the untired smile of youth  
 Did light outward its own sighs!

## VIII.

'Twas a duke's fair orphan-girl, and  
 her uncle's ward — the earl,  
*(Toll slowly)*  
 Who betrothed her twelve years old,  
 for the sake of dowry gold,  
 To his son Lord Leigh the churl.

## IX.

But what time she had made good all  
 her years of womanhood,  
*(Toll slowly)*  
 Unto both these lords of Leigh spake  
 she out right sovranly,  
 "My will runneth as my blood.

## X.

"And while this same blood makes  
 red this same right hand's  
 veins," she said,  
*(Toll slowly)*  
 "'Tis my will as lady free, not to wed  
 a lord of Leigh,  
 But Sir Guy of Linteged."

## XI.

The old earl he smiled smooth, then  
 he sighed for wilful youth, —  
*(Toll slowly)*  
 "Good my niece, that hand withal  
 looketh somewhat soft and  
 small  
 For so large a will in sooth."

## XII.

She, too, smiled by that same sign;  
 but her smile was cold and fine.  
*(Toll slowly)*  
 "Little hand clasps muckle gold, or  
 it were not worth the hold  
 Of thy son, good uncle mine."

## XIII.

Then the young lord jerked his  
 breath, and sware thickly in his  
 teeth, —  
*(Toll slowly)*  
 "He would wed his own betrothed,  
 an she loved him an she loathed,  
 Let the life come, or the death."

## XIV.

Up she rose with scornful eyes, as her  
 father's child might rise, —  
*(Toll slowly)*  
 "Thy hound's blood, my Lord of  
 Leigh, stains thy knightly heel,"  
 quoth she,  
 "And he moans not where he lies;

## XV.

"But a woman's will dies hard, in  
 the hall or on the sward —  
*(Toll slowly)*

"By that grave, my lords, which  
made me orphaned girl and  
dowered lady,  
I deny you wife and ward!"

## XVI.

Unto each she bowed her head, and  
swept past with lofty tread.

*(Toll slowly)*

Ere the midnight-bell had ceased, in  
the chapel had the priest  
Blessed her, bride of Linteged.

## XVII.

Fast and fain the bridal train along  
the night-storm rode amain:

*(Toll slowly)*

Hard the steeds of lord and serf struck  
their hoofs out on the turf,  
In the pauses of the rain.

## XVIII.

Fast and fain the kinsmen's train  
along the storm pursued amain,

*(Toll slowly)*

Steed on steed-track, dashing off, —  
thickening, doubling, hoof on  
hoof,  
In the pauses of the rain.

## XIX.

And the bridegroom led the flight on  
his red-roan steed of might,

*(Toll slowly)*

And the bride lay on his arm, still, as  
if she feared no harm,  
Smiling out into the night.

## XX.

"Dost thou fear?" he said at last.  
"Nay," she answered him in  
haste, —

*(Toll slowly)*

"Not such death as we could find:  
only life with one behind.  
Ride on fast as fear, ride fast!"

## XXI.

Up the mountain wheeled the steed,  
girth to ground, and fetlocks  
spread,

*(Toll slowly)*

Headlong bounds, and rocking flanks,  
— down he staggered, down the  
banks,  
To the towers of Linteged.

## XXII.

High and low the serfs looked out,  
red the flambeaus tossed about,  
*(Toll slowly)*

In the courtyard rose the cry, "Live  
the duchess and Sir Guy!"  
But she never heard them shout.

## XXIII.

On the steed she dropped her cheek,  
kissed his mane, and kissed his  
neck, —

*(Toll slowly)*

"I had happier died by thee than  
lived on a Lady Leigh,"  
Were the first words she did speak.

## XXIV.

But a three-months' joyaunce lay  
'twixt that moment and to-day,  
*(Toll slowly)*

When five hundred archers tall stand  
beside the castle-wall  
To recapture Duchess May.

## XXV.

And the castle standeth black, with  
the red sun at its back;

*(Toll slowly)*

And a fortnight's siege is done; and,  
except the duchess, none  
Can misdoubt the coming wreck.

## XXVI.

Then the captain, young Lord Leigh,  
with his eyes so gray of blee,

*(Toll slowly)*

And thin lips that scarcely sheath the  
cold white gnashing of his teeth,  
Gnashed in smiling, absently,

## XXVII.

Cried aloud, "So goes the day, bride-  
groom fair of Duchess May!"

*(Toll slowly)*

"Look thy last upon that sun! if thou  
seest to-morrow's one  
'Twill be through a foot of clay.

## XXVIII.

"Ha, fair bride! dost hear no sound,  
save that moaning of the  
hound?"

*(Toll slowly)*

"Thou and I have parted troth; yet I  
keep my vengeance-oath,  
And the other may come round.

## XXIX.

"Ha! thy will is brave to dare, and  
thy new love past compare;"  
(*Toll slowly*)  
"Yet thine old love's falchion brave  
is as strong a thing to have  
As the will of lady fair.

## XXX.

"Peck on blindly, netted dove! If a  
wife's name thee behove,"  
(*Toll slowly*)  
"Thou shalt wear the same to-mor-  
row, ere the grave has hid the  
sorrow  
Of thy last ill-mated love.

## XXXI.

"O'er his fixed and silent mouth thou  
and I will call back troth;"  
(*Toll slowly*)  
"He shall altar be and priest; and he  
will not cry at least,  
'I forbid you, I am loath!"

## XXXII.

"I will wring thy fingers pale in the  
gauntlet of my mail:"  
(*Toll slowly*)  
"Little hand and muckle gold' close  
shall lie within my hold,  
As the sword did to prevail."

## XXXIII.

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the  
little birds sang west,  
(*Toll slowly*)  
Oh, and laughed the Duchess May,  
and her soul did put away  
All his boasting, for a jest.

## XXXIV.

In her chamber did she sit, laughing  
low to think of it, —  
(*Toll slowly*)  
"Tower is strong, and will is free:  
thou canst boast, my Lord of  
Leigh;  
But thou boastest little wit."

## XXXV.

In her tire-glass gazèd she, and she  
blushed right womanly:  
(*Toll slowly*)  
She blushed half from her disdain,  
half her beauty was so plain;  
"Oath for oath, my Lord of Leigh!"

## XXXVI.

Straight she called her maidens in, —  
"Since ye gave me blame  
herein,"  
(*Toll slowly*)  
"That a bridal such as mine should  
lack gauds to make it fine,  
Come and shrive me from that sin.

## XXXVII.

"It is three months gone to-day since  
I gave mine hand away:"  
(*Toll slowly*)  
"Bring the gold, and bring the gem,  
we will keep bride-state in them,  
While we keep the foe at bay.

## XXXVIII.

"On your arms I loose mine hair;  
comb it smooth, and crown it  
fair:"  
(*Toll slowly*)  
"I would look in purple pall from  
this lattice down the wall,  
And throw scorn to one that's  
there!"

## XXXIX.

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the  
little birds sang west:  
(*Toll slowly*)  
On the tower the castle's lord leant  
in silence on his sword,  
With an anguish in his breast.

## XL.

With a spirit-laden weight did he lean  
down passionate:  
(*Toll slowly*)  
They have almost sapped the wall, —  
they will enter therewithal  
With no knocking at the gate.

## XLI.

Then the sword he leant upon shiv-  
ered, snapped upon the stone:  
(*Toll slowly*)  
"Sword," he thought with inward  
laugh, "ill thou servest for a  
staff  
When thy nobler use is done!"

## XLII.

"Sword, thy nobler use is done!  
tower is lost, and shame begun."  
(*Toll slowly*)

“ If we met them in the breach, hilt  
to hilt, or speech to speech,  
We should die there, each for one.

XLIII.

“ If we met them at the wall, we  
should singly, vainly fall;”  
*(Toll slowly)*

“ But if *I* die here alone, — then I die  
who am but one,  
And die nobly for them all.

XLIV.

“ Five true friends lie, for my sake, in  
the moat and in the brake;”  
*(Toll slowly)*

“ Thirteen warriors lie at rest, with a  
black wound in the breast:  
And not one of these will wake.

XLV.

“ So, no more of this shall be. Heart-  
blood weighs too heavily;”  
*(Toll slowly)*

“ And I could not sleep in grave, with  
the faithful and the brave  
Heaped around and over me.

XLVI.

“ Since young Clare a mother hath,  
and young Ralph a plighted  
faith;”  
*(Toll slowly)*

“ Since my pale young sister’s cheeks  
blush like rose when Ronald  
speaks,  
Albeit never a word she saith, —

XLVII.

“ These shall never die for me: life-  
blood falls too heavily.”  
*(Toll slowly)*

“ And if *I* die here apart, o’er my dead  
and silent heart  
They shall pass out safe and free.

XLVIII.

“ When the foe hath heard it said,  
‘Death holds Guy of Linteged,’”  
*(Toll slowly)*

“ That new corse new peace shall  
bring, and a blessed, blessed  
thing  
Shall the stone be at its head.

XLIX.

“ Then my friends shall pass out free,  
and shall bear my memory;”  
*(Toll slowly)*

“ Then my foes shall sleek their pride,  
soothing fair my widowed bride,  
Whose sole sin was love of me.

L.

“ With their words all smooth and  
sweet, they will front her, and  
entreat,”  
*(Toll slowly)*

“ And their purple pall will spread  
underneath her fainting head  
While her tears drop over it.

LI.

“ She will weep her woman’s tears, she  
will pray her woman’s prayers;”  
*(Toll slowly)*

“ But her heart is young in pain, and  
her hopes will spring again  
By the suntime of her years.

LII.

“ Ah, sweet May! ah, sweetest grief!  
once I vowed thee my belief”  
*(Toll slowly)*

“ That thy name expressed thy sweet-  
ness, — May of poets in com-  
pleteness!  
Now my May-day seemeth brief.”

LIII.

All these silent thoughts did swim o’er  
his eyes grown strange and dim,  
*(Toll slowly)*

Till his true men in the place wished  
they stood there face to face  
With the foe, instead of him.

LIV.

“ One last oath, my friends that wear  
faithful hearts to do and dare!”  
*(Toll slowly)*

“ Tower must fall, and bride be lost:  
swear me service worth the  
cost!”  
Bold they stood around to swear.

LV.

“ Each man clasp my hand, and swear,  
by the deed we failed in there,”  
*(Toll slowly)*

"Not for vengeance, not for right, will  
ye strike one blow to-night!"  
Pale they stood around to swear.

## LVI.

"One last boon, young Ralph and  
Clare! faithful hearts to do and  
dare!"

*(Toll slowly)*

"Bring that steed up from his stall,  
which she kissed before you all,  
Guide him up the turret-stair.

## LVII.

"Ye shall harness him aright, and  
lead upward to this height;"

*(Toll slowly)*

"Once in love, and twice in war, hath  
he borne me strong and far:  
He shall bear me far to-night."

## LVIII.

Then his men looked to and fro when  
they heard him speaking so,

*(Toll slowly)*

"'Las! the noble heart," they  
thought: "he, in sooth, is grief-  
distracted:

Would we stood here with the foe!"

## LIX.

But a fire flashed from his eye 'twixt  
their thought and their reply, —

*(Toll slowly)*

"Have ye so much time to waste?  
We who ride here must ride  
fast

As we wish our foes to fly."

## LX.

They have fetched the steed with  
care, in the harness he did wear,

*(Toll slowly)*

Past the court, and through the doors,  
across the rushes of the floors;

But they goad him up the stair.

## LXI.

Then, from out her bower chambère,  
did the Duchess May repair:

*(Toll slowly)*

"Tell me now what is your need,"  
said the lady, "of this steed,  
That ye goad him up the stair?"

## LXII.

Calm she stood; unbodkined through  
fell her dark hair to her shoe;

*(Toll slowly)*

And the smile upon her face, ere she  
left the tiring-glass,  
Had not time enough to go.

## LXIII.

"Get thee back, sweet Duchess May!  
hope is gone like yesterday:"

*(Toll slowly)*

"One half-hour completes the breach:  
and thy lord grows wild of  
speech —

Get thee in, sweet lady, and pray!

## LXIV.

"In the east tower, high'st of all,  
loud he cries for steed from  
stall:"

*(Toll slowly)*

"He would ride as far," quoth he,  
"as for love and victory,  
Though he rides the castle-wall."

## LXV.

"And we fetch the steed from stall,  
up where never a hoof did  
fall" —

*(Toll slowly)*

"Wifely prayer meets deathly need:  
may the sweet heavens hear  
thee plead

If he rides the castle-wall!"

## LXVI.

Low she dropt her head, and lower,  
till her hair coiled on the floor,

*(Toll slowly)*

And tear after tear you heard fall dis-  
tinct as any word

Which you might be listening for.

## LXVII.

"Get thee in, thou soft ladye! here  
is never a place for thee!"

*(Toll slowly)*

"Braid thine hair, and clasp thy gown,  
that thy beauty in its moan  
May find grace with Leigh of  
Leigh."

## LXVIII.

She stood up in bitter case, with a  
pale yet steady face,

*(Toll slowly)*

Like a statue thunderstruck, which,  
though quivering, seems to look  
Right against the thunder-place.

## LXIX.

And her foot trod in with pride her  
own tears i' the stone beside:

*(Toll slowly)*

"Go to, faithful friends, go to! judge  
no more what ladies do,  
No, nor how their lords may ride!"

## LXX.

Then the good steed's rein she took,  
and his neck did kiss and stroke:

*(Toll slowly)*

Soft he neighed to answer her, and  
then followed up the stair  
For the love of her sweet look.

## LXXI.

Oh, and steeply, steeply wound up  
the narrow stair around,

*(Toll slowly)*

Oh, and closely, closely speeding,  
step by step beside her treading,  
Did he follow, meek as hound.

## LXXII.

On the east tower, high'st of all,—  
there, where never a hoof did  
fall,—

*(Toll slowly)*

Out they swept, a vision steady, noble  
steed and lovely lady,  
Calm as if in bower or stall.

## LXXIII.

Down she knelt at her lord's knee,  
and she looked up silently,

*(Toll slowly)*

And he kissed her twice and thrice,  
for that look within her eyes  
Which he could not bear to see.

## LXXIV.

Quoth he, "Get thee from this strife,  
and the sweet saints bless thy  
life!"

*(Toll slowly)*

"In this hour I stand in need of my  
noble red-roan steed,  
But no more of my noble wife."

## LXXV.

Quoth she, "Meekly have I done all  
thy biddings under sun;"

*(Toll slowly)*

"But by all my womanhood, which  
is proved so, true and good,  
I will never do this one.

## LXXVI.

"Now by womanhood's degree and  
by wifhood's verity,"

*(Toll slowly)*

"In this hour, if thou hast need of thy  
noble red-roan steed,  
Thou hast also need of *me*.

## LXXVII.

"By this golden ring ye see on this  
lifted hand pardie,"

*(Toll slowly)*

"If this hour, on castle-wall can be  
room for steed from stall,  
Shall be also room for *me*.

## LXXVIII.

"So the sweet saints with me be!"  
(did she utter solemnly)

*(Toll slowly)*

"If a man, this eventide, on this cas-  
tle-wall will ride,  
He shall ride the same with *me*."

## LXXIX.

Oh, he sprang up in the selle, and he  
laughed out bitter-well,—

*(Toll slowly)*

"Wouldst thou ride among the leaves,  
as we used on other eves,  
To hear chime a vesper-bell?"

## LXXX.

She clung closer to his knee—"Ay,  
beneath the cypress-tree!"

*(Toll slowly)*

"Mock me not; for otherwhere than  
along the greenwood fair  
Have I ridden fast with thee.

## LXXXI.

"Fast I rode with new-made vows  
from my angry kinsman's  
house:"

*(Toll slowly)*

"What! and would you men should  
reck that I dared more for love's  
sake

As a bride than as a spouse?"

## LXXXII.

"What! and would you it should fall,  
as a proverb, before all,"  
(*Toll slowly*)  
"That a bride may keep your side  
while through castle-gate you  
ride,  
Yet eschew the castle-wall?"

## LXXXIII.

Ho! the breach yawns into ruin, and  
roars up against her suing,  
(*Toll slowly*)  
With the inarticulate din, and the  
dreadful falling-in —  
Shrieks of doing and undoing!

## LXXXIV.

Twice he wrung her hands in twain;  
but the small hands closed  
again.  
(*Toll slowly*)  
Back he reined the steed — back,  
back! but she trailed along his  
track  
With a frantic clasp and strain.

## LXXXV.

Evermore the foemen pour through  
the crash of window and door,  
(*Toll slowly*)  
And the shouts of Leigh and Leigh,  
and the shrieks of "Kill!" and  
"Flee!"  
Strike up clear amid the roar.

## LXXXVI.

Thrice he wrung her hands in twain;  
but they closed and clung again,  
(*Toll slowly*)  
While she clung, as one, withstood,  
clasps a Christ upon the rood,  
In a spasm of deathly pain.

## LXXXVII.

She clung wild, and she clung mute,  
with her shuddering lips half-  
shut;  
(*Toll slowly*)  
Her head fallen as half in swoond,  
hair and knee swept on the  
ground,  
She clung wild to stirrup and foot.

## LXXXVIII.

Back he reined his steed back-thrown  
on the slippery coping-stone;  
(*Toll slowly*)  
Back the iron hoofs did grind on the  
battlement behind,  
Whence a hundred feet went down;

## LXXXIX.

And his heel did press and goad on  
the quivering flank bestrode, —  
(*Toll slowly*)  
"Friends and brothers, save my wife!  
Pardon, sweet, in change for  
life:  
But I ride alone to God."

## XC.

Straight, as if the holy name had up-  
breathed her like a flame,  
(*Toll slowly*)  
She upsprang, she rose upright, in his  
selle she sate in sight.  
By her love she overcame.

## XCI.

And her head was on his breast, where  
she smiled as one at rest, —  
(*Toll slowly*)  
"Ring," she cried, "O vesper-bell, in  
the beechwood's old chapelle,  
But the passing-bell rings best!"

## XCII.

They have caught out at the rein which  
Sir Guy threw loose, in vain;  
(*Toll slowly*)  
For the horse, in stark despair, with  
his front hoofs poised in air,  
On the last verge rears amain.

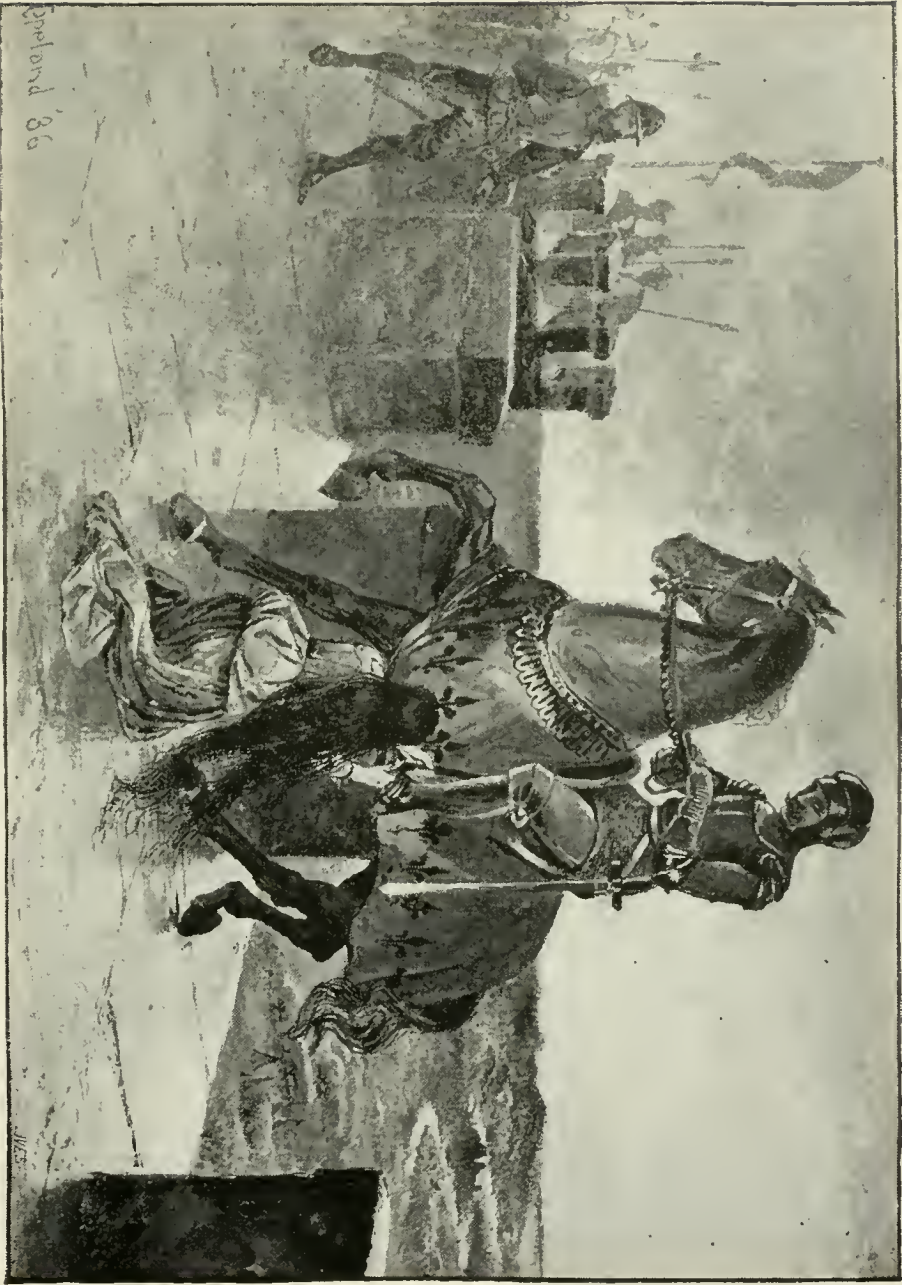
## XCIII.

Now he hangs, he rocks between, and  
his nostrils curdle in;  
(*Toll slowly*)  
Now he shivers head and hoof, and  
the flakes of foam fall off,  
And his face grows fierce and thin;

## XCIV.

And a look of human woe from his  
staring eyes did go;  
(*Toll slowly*)  
And a sharp cry uttered he, in a fore-  
told agony  
Of the headlong death below;





"Back he reined his steed, back-thrown  
on the slippery coping-stone." — Page 300.

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XCV.

And, "Ring, ring, thou passing-bell,"  
still she cried, "i' the old cha-  
pelle!"

*(Toll slowly)*

Then back-toppling, crashing back, a  
dead weight flung out to wrack,  
Horse and riders overfell.

I.

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the  
little birds sang west,

*(Toll slowly)*

And I read this ancient Rhyme in the  
churchyard, while the chime  
Slowly tolled for one at rest.

II.

The abeles moved in the sun, and the  
river smooth did run,

*(Toll slowly)*

And the ancient Rhyme rang strange,  
with its passion and its change,  
Here, where all done lay undone.

III.

And beneath a willow-tree I a little  
grave did see,

*(Toll slowly)*

Where was graved, "HERE UNDE-  
FILED, LIETH MAUD, A THREE-  
YEAR CHILD,  
EIGHTEEN HUNDRED, FORTY-THREE.

IV.

Then, O spirits, did I say, ye who rode  
so fast that day,

*(Toll slowly)*

Did star-wheels and angel-wings, with  
their holy winnowings,  
Keep beside you all the way?

V.

Though in passion ye would dash with  
a blind and heavy crash,

*(Toll slowly)*

Up against the thick-bossed shield of  
God's judgment in the field, —  
Though your heart and brain were  
rash, —

VI.

Now your will is all unwilling, now  
your pulses are all stilled,

*(Toll slowly)*

Now ye lie as meek and mild (where-  
so laid) as Maud, the child  
Whose small grave was lately filled.

VII.

Beating heart and burning brow, ye  
are very patient now,

*(Toll slowly)*

And the children might be bold to  
pluck the kingeups from your  
mould,  
Ere a month had let them grow.

VIII.

And you let the goldfinch sing, in the  
alder near in spring, —

*(Toll slowly)*

Let her build her nest, and sit all the  
three weeks out on it,  
Murmuring not at any thing.

IX.

In your patience ye are strong; cold  
and heat ye take not wrong:

*(Toll slowly)*

When the trumpet of the angel blows  
eternity's evangel,  
Time will seem to you not long.

X.

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the  
little birds sang west,

*(Toll slowly)*

And I said in under-breath, "All our  
life is mixed with death,  
And who knoweth which is best?"

XI.

Oh, the little birds sang east, and the  
little birds sang west,

*(Toll slowly)*

And I smiled to think God's greatness  
flowed around our incomplete-  
ness, —

Round our restlessness, his rest.

## THE ROMANCE OF THE SWAN'S NEST.

"So the dreams depart,  
So the fading phantoms flee,  
And the sharp reality  
Now must act its part."

WESTWOOD'S *Beads from a Rosary.*

I.

LITTLE Ellie sits alone  
'Mid the beeches of a meadow,  
By a stream-side on the grass,  
And the trees are showering down  
Doubles of their leaves in shadow,  
On her shining hair and face.

II.

She has thrown her bonnet by,  
And her feet she has been dipping  
In the shallow water's flow;  
Now she holds them nakedly  
In her hands, all sleek and dripping,  
While she rocketh to and fro.

III.

Little Ellie sits alone,  
And the smile she softly uses  
Fills the silence like a speech,  
While she thinks what shall be done,  
And the sweetest pleasure chooses  
For her future within reach.

IV.

Little Ellie in her smile  
Chooses, "I will have a lover,  
Riding on a steed of steeds:  
He shall love me without guile,  
And to *him* I will discover  
The swan's nest among the reeds.

V.

"And the steed shall be red-roan,  
And the lover shall be noble,  
With an eye that takes the breath.  
And the lute he plays upon  
Shall strike ladies into trouble,  
As his sword strikes men to death.

VI.

"And the steed it shall be shod  
All in silver, hosed in azure;  
And the mane shall swim the  
wind;  
And the hoofs along the sod  
Shall flash onward, and keep measure,  
Till the shepherds look behind.

VII.

"But my lover will not prize  
All the glory that he rides in,  
When he gazes in my face.  
He will say, 'O Love, thine eyes  
Build the shrine my soul abides in,  
And I kneel here for thy grace!'

VIII.

"Then, ay, then he shall kneel low,  
With the red-roan steed anear him,  
Which shall seem to understand,  
Till I answer, 'Rise and go!  
For the world must love and fear  
him  
Whom I gift with heart and hand.

IX.

"Then he will arise so pale,  
I shall feel my own lips tremble  
With a *yes* I must not say:  
Nathless maiden-brave, 'Farewell,  
I will utter, and dissemble—  
'Light to-morrow with to-day!'

X.

"Then he'll ride among the hills  
To the wide world past the river,  
There to put away all wrong,  
To make straight distorted wills,  
And to empty the broad quiver  
Which the wicked bear along.

## XI.

“ Three times shall a young foot-page  
Swim the stream, and climb the  
mountain,  
And kneel down beside my feet:  
‘ Lo! my master sends this gage,  
Lady, for thy pity’s counting.  
What wilt thou exchange for it? ’

## XII.

“ And the first time I will send  
A white rosebud for a guerdon:  
And the second time, a glove;  
But the third time I may bend  
From my pride, and answer, —  
‘ Pardon,  
If he comes to take my love.’

## XIII.

“ Then the young foot-page will run;  
Then my lover will ride faster,  
Till he kneeleth at my knee:  
‘ I am a duke’s eldest son,  
Thousand serfs do call me master,  
But, O Love, I love but *thee!* ’

## XIV.

“ He will kiss me on the mouth  
Then, and lead me as a lover  
Through the crowds that praise  
his deeds.

And, when soul-tied by one troth,  
Unto *him* I will discover  
That swan’s nest among the  
reeds.”

## XV.

Little Ellie, with her smile  
Not yet ended, rose up gayly,  
Tied the bonnet, donned the shoe,  
And went homeward, round a mile,  
Just to see, as she did daily,  
What more eggs were with the  
two.

## XVI.

Pushing through the elm-tree copse,  
Winding up the stream, light-  
hearted,  
Where the osier pathway leads,  
Past the boughs she stoops, and stops.  
Lo, the wild swan had deserted,  
And a rat had gnawed the reeds!

## XVII.

Ellie went home sad and slow.  
If she found the lover ever,  
With his red-roan steed of steeds,  
Sooth I know not; but I know  
She could never show him — never,  
That swan’s nest among the reeds.

## BERTHA IN THE LANE.

## I.

PUT the broidery-frame away,  
For my sewing is all done:  
The last thread is used to-day,  
And I need not join it on.  
Though the clock stands at the noon,  
I am weary. I have sewn,  
Sweet, for thee, a wedding-gown.

## II.

Sister, help me to the bed,  
And stand near me, dearest sweet.  
Do not shrink, nor be afraid,  
Blushing with a sudden heat!

No one standeth in the street?  
By God’s love I go to meet,  
Love I thee with love complete.

## III.

Lean thy face down; drop it in  
These two hands, that I may  
hold  
’Twixt their palms thy cheek and  
chin,  
Stroking back the curls of gold:  
’Tis a fair, fair face, in sooth —  
Larger eyes and redder mouth  
Than mine were in my first youth.

## IV.

Thou art younger by seven years —  
 Ah! so bashful at my gaze,  
 That the lashes, hung with tears,  
 Grow too heavy to npraise?  
 I would wound thee by no touch  
 Which thy shyness feels as such.  
 Dost thou mind me, dear, so much?

## V.

Have I not been nigh a mother  
 To thy sweetness? — tell me, dear;  
 Have we not loved one another  
 Tenderly, from year to year,  
 Since our dying mother mild  
 Said, with accents undefiled,  
 "Child, be mother to this child"?

## VI.

Mother, mother, up in heaven,  
 Stand up on the jasper sea,  
 And be witness I have given  
 All the gifts required of me. —  
 Hope that blessed me, bliss that  
 crowned,  
 Love that left me with a wound,  
 Life itself that turneth round.

## VII.

Mother, mother, thou art kind,  
 Thou art standing in the room,  
 In a molten glory shrined,  
 That rays off into the gloom;  
 But thy smile is bright and bleak  
 Like cold waves: I cannot speak,  
 I sob in it, and grow weak.

## VIII.

Ghostly mother, keep aloof  
 One hour longer from my soul;  
 For I still am thinking of  
 Earth's warm-beating joy and dole!  
 On my finger is a ring  
 Which I still see glittering  
 When the night hides every thing.

## IX.

Little sister, thou art pale!  
 Ah, I have a wandering brain, —  
 But I lose that fever-bale,  
 And my thoughts grow calm again.  
 Lean down closer, closer still:  
 I have words thine ear to fill,  
 And would kiss thee at my will.

## X.

Dear, I heard thee in the spring, —  
 Thee and Robert, — through the  
 trees, —  
 When we all went gathering  
 Boughs of May-bloom for the bees.  
 Do not start so! think instead  
 How the sunshine overhead  
 Seemed to trickle through the shade.

## XI.

What a day it was that day!  
 Hills and vales did openly  
 Seem to heave, and throb away  
 At the sight of the great sky;  
 And the silence, as it stood  
 In the glory's golden flood,  
 Audibly did bud, and bud.

## XII.

Through the winding hedgerows  
 green  
 How we wandered, I and you,  
 With the bowery tops shut in,  
 And the gates that showed the  
 view!  
 How we talked there: thrushes soft  
 Sang our praises out, or oft  
 Bleatings took them from the croft:

## XIII.

Till the pleasure, grown too strong,  
 Left me muter evermore,  
 And, the winding road being long,  
 I walked out of sight, before,  
 And so, wrapt in musings fond,  
 Issued (past the wayside pond)  
 On the meadow-lands beyond.

## XIV.

I sate down beneath the beech  
 Which leans over to the lane,  
 And the far sound of your speech  
 Did not promise any pain;  
 And I blessed you full and free,  
 With a smile stooped tenderly  
 O'er the May-flowers on my knee.

## XV.

But the sound grew into word  
 As the speakers drew more near —  
 Sweet, forgive me that I heard  
 What you wished me not to hear.  
 Do not weep so, do not shake;  
 Oh, I heard thee, Bertha, make  
 Good true answers for my sake.

## XVI.

Yes, and HE too! let him stand  
 In thy thoughts untouched by  
 blame.  
 Could he help it, if my hand  
 He had claimed with hasty claim?  
 That was wrong, perhaps; but then  
 Such things be — and will again.  
 Women cannot judge for men.

## XVII.

Had he seen thee when he swore  
 He would love but me alone?  
 Thou wast absent, sent before  
 To our kin in Sidmouth town.  
 When he saw thee, who art best  
 Past compare, and loveliest,  
 He but judged thee as the rest.

## XVIII.

Could we blame him with grave  
 words,  
 Thou and I, dear, if we might?  
 Thy brown eyes have looks like birds  
 Flying straightway to the light:  
 Mine are older. Hush! Look out —  
 Up the street! Is none without?  
 How the poplar swings about!

## XIX.

And that hour, beneath the beech,  
 When I listened in a dream,  
 And he said in his deep speech  
 That he owed me all *esteem*, —  
 Each word swam in on my brain  
 With a dim, dilating pain,  
 Till it burst with that last strain.

## XX.

I fell flooded with a dark,  
 In the silence of a swoon.  
 When I rose, still cold and stark,  
 There was night; I saw the moon:  
 And the stars each in its place,  
 And the May-blooms on the grass,  
 Seemed to wonder what I was.

## XXI.

And I walked as if apart  
 From myself, when I could stand;  
 And I pitied my own heart,  
 As if I held it in my hand,  
 Somewhat coldly, with a sense  
 Of fulfilled benevolence,  
 And a "poor thing" negligence.

## XXII.

And I answered coldly, too,  
 When you met me at the door;  
 And I only *heard* the dew  
 Dripping from me to the floor;  
 And the flowers I bade you see  
 Were too withered for the bee,  
 As my life henceforth for me.

## XXIII.

Do not weep so, dear — heart-warm!  
 All was best as it befell.  
 If I say he did me harm,  
 I speak wild — I am not well.  
 All his words were kind and good —  
*He esteemed me.* Only, blood  
 Runs so faint in womanhood!

## XXIV.

Then I always was too grave,  
 Liked the saddest ballad sung, —  
 With that look, besides, we have  
 In our faces, who die young.  
 I had died, dear, all the same:  
 Life's long, joyous, jostling game  
 Is too loud for my meek shame.

## XXV.

We are so unlike each other,  
 Thou and I, that none could guess  
 We were children of one mother,  
 But for mutual tenderness.  
 Thou art rose-lined from the cold,  
 And meant verily to hold  
 Life's pure pleasures manifold.

## XXVI.

I am pale as crocus grows  
 Close beside a rose-tree's root:  
 Whoso'er would reach the rose  
 Treads the crocus under foot.  
 I, like May-bloom on thorn-tree,  
 Thou, like merry summer-bee, —  
 Fit that I be plucked for thee!

## XXVII.

Yet who plucks me? No one mourns,  
 I have lived my season out,  
 And now die of my own thorns  
 Which I could not live without.  
 Sweet, be merry! How the light  
 Comes and goes! If it be night,  
 Keep the candles in my sight.

## XXVIII.

Are there footsteps at the door?  
 Look out quickly. Yea, or nay?  
 Some one might be waiting for  
 Some last word that I might say.  
 Nay? So best! so angels would  
 Stand off clear from deathly road,  
 Not to cross the sight of God.

## XXIX.

Colder grow my hands and feet.  
 When I wear the shroud I made,  
 Let the folds lie straight and neat,  
 And the rosemary be spread,  
 That, if any friend should come,  
 (To see *thee*, sweet), all the room  
 May be lifted out of gloom.

## XXX.

And, dear Bertha, let me keep  
 On my hand this little ring,  
 Which at nights, when others sleep,  
 I can still see glittering.  
 Let me wear it out of sight,  
 In the grave, where it will light  
 All the dark up, day and night.

## XXXI.

On that grave drop not a tear!  
 Else, though fathom-deep the place,  
 Through the woollen shroud I wear  
 I shall feel it on my face.

Rather smile there, blessed one,  
 Thinking of me in the sun,  
 Or forget me, — smiling on!

## XXXII.

Art thou near me? Nearer! so —  
 Kiss me close upon the eyes,  
 That the earthly light may go  
 Sweetly, as it used to rise  
 When I watched the morning-gray  
 Strike, betwixt the hills, the way  
 He was sure to come that day.

## XXXIII.

So — no more vain words be said!  
 The hosannas nearer roll.  
 Mother, smile now on thy dead,  
 I am death-strong in my soul.  
 Mystic Dove alit on cross,  
 Guide the poor bird of the snows  
 Through the snow-wind above loss!

## XXXIV.

Jesus, Victim, comprehending  
 Love's divine self-abnegation,  
 Cleanse my love in its self-spending,  
 And absorb the poor libation!  
 Wind my thread of life up higher,  
 Up, through angels' hands of fire!  
 I aspire while I expire.

## LADY GERALDINE'S COURTSHIP.

A ROMANCE OF THE AGE.

*A poet writes to his friend. PLACE. — A room in Wycombe Hall. TIME. — Late in the evening.*

## I.

DEAR my friend and fellow-student, I  
 would lean my spirit o'er you!  
 Down the purple of this chamber  
 tears should scarcely run at  
 will.

I am humbled who was humble.  
 Friend, I bow my head before  
 you:  
 You should lead me to my peasants;  
 but their faces are too still.

## II.

There's a lady, an earl's daughter, —  
 she is proud and she is noble,  
 And she treads the crimson carpet,



and she breathes the perfumed  
air,  
And a kingly blood sends glances up,  
her princely eye to trouble,  
And the shadow of a monarch's  
crown is softened in her hair.

## III.

She has halls among the woodlands,  
she has castles by the breakers,  
She has farms and she has manors,  
she can threaten and command.  
And the palpitating engines snort in  
steam across her acres,  
As they mark upon the blasted heaven  
the measure of the land.

## IV.

There are none of England's daugh-  
ters who can show a prouder  
presence;  
Upon princely suitors praying, she  
'has looked in her disdain.  
She was sprung of English nobles, I  
was born of English peasants:  
What was *I* that I should love her,  
save for competence to pain!

## V.

I was only a poor poet, made for  
singing at her casement,  
As the finches or the thrushes, while  
she thought of other things.  
Oh, she walked so high above me, she  
appeared to my abasement,  
In her lovely silken murmur, like an  
angel clad in wings!

## VI.

Many vassals bow before her as her  
carriage sweeps their door-  
ways;  
She has blest their little children, as a  
priest or queen were she:  
Far too tender, or too cruel far, her  
smile upon the poor was,  
For I thought it was the same smile  
which she used to smile on *me*.

## VII.

She has voters in the commons, she  
has lovers in the palace,  
And of all the fair court-ladies, few  
have jewels half as fine;

Of the prince has named her beauty  
'twixt the red wine and the  
chalice:  
Oh, and what was *I* to love her? my  
beloved, my Geraldine!

## VIII.

Yet I could not choose but love her:  
I was born to poet-uses, —  
To love all things set above me, all of  
good and all of fair.  
Nymphs of mountain, not of valley,  
we are wont to call the Muses;  
And, in nympholeptic climbing, poets  
pass from mount to star.

## IX.

And because I was a poet, and be-  
cause the public praised me,  
With a critical deduction for the mod-  
ern writer's fault,  
I could sit at rich men's tables,  
though the courtesies that raised  
me  
Still suggested clear between us the  
pale spectrum of the salt.

## X.

And they praised me in her presence:  
"Will your book appear this  
summer?"  
Then, returning to each other — "Yes,  
our plans are for the moors;"  
Then, with whisper dropped behind  
me — "There he is! the latest  
comer.  
Oh, she only likes his verses! what is  
over, she endures.

## XI.

"Quite low-born, self-educated! some-  
what gifted, though, by nature,  
And we make a point of asking him,  
— of being very kind.  
You may speak, he does not hear you;  
and, besides, he writes no satire:  
All these serpents kept by charmers  
leave the natural sting behind."

## XII.

I grew scornfuller, grew colder, as I  
stood up there among them,  
Till, as frost intense will burn you, the  
cold scorning scorched my brow;  
When a sudden silver speaking, grave-  
ly cadenced, over-rung them,  
And a sudden silken stirring touched  
my inner nature through.

## XIII.

I looked upward and beheld her:  
 with a calm and regnant spirit,  
 Slowly round she swept her eyelids,  
 and said clear before them all,  
 "Have you such superfluous honor,  
 sir, that, able to confer it,  
 You will come down, Mister Bertram,  
 as my guest to Wycombe Hall?"

## XIV.

Here she paused: she had been paler  
 at the first word of her speak-  
 ing,  
 But, because a silence followed it,  
 blushed somewhat, as forshame,  
 Then, as scorning her own feeling, re-  
 sumed calmly, "I am seeking  
 More distinction than these gentle-  
 men think worthy of my claim.

## XV.

"Ne'ertheless, you see, I seek it; not  
 because I am a woman,"  
 (Here her smile sprang like a fountain,  
 and so, overflowed her mouth),  
 "But because my woods in Sussex  
 have some purple shades at  
 gloaming  
 Which are worthy of a king in state,  
 or poet in his youth.

## XVI.

"I invite you, Mister Bertram, to no  
 scene for worldly speeches, —  
 Sir, I scarce should dare, — but only  
 where God asked the thrushes  
 first:  
 And if *you* will sing beside them, in  
 the covert of my beeches,  
 I will thank you for the woodlands,  
 for the human world at worst."

## XVII.

Then she smiled around right childly,  
 then she gazed around right  
 queenly,  
 And I bowed — I could not answer;  
 alternated light and gloom,  
 While, as one who quells the lions,  
 with a steady eye, serenely,  
 She, with level, fronting eyelids,  
 passed out stately from the  
 room.

## XVIII.

Oh the blessèd woods of Sussex! I  
 can hear them still around me,  
 With their leafy tide of greenery still  
 rippling up the wind.  
 Oh the cursèd woods of Sussex! where  
 the hunter's arrow found me  
 When a fair face and a tender voice  
 had made me mad and blind!

## XIX.

In that ancient hall of Wycombe  
 thronged the numerous guests  
 invited,  
 And the lovely London ladies trod  
 the floors with gliding feet;  
 And their voices, low with fashion, not  
 with feeling, softly freighted  
 All the air about the windows with  
 elastic laughers sweet.

## XX.

For at eve the open windows flung  
 their light out on the terrace,  
 Which the floating orbs of curtains did  
 with gradual shadow sweep,  
 While the swans upon the river, fed  
 at morning by the heiress,  
 Trembled downward through their  
 snowy wings at music in their  
 sleep.

## XXI.

And there evermore was music, both  
 of instrument and singing,  
 Till the finches of the shrubberies  
 grew restless in the dark;  
 But the cedars stood up motionless,  
 each in a moonlight-ringing,  
 And the deer, half in the glimmer,  
 strewed the hollows of the park.

## XXII.

And though sometimes she would  
 bind me with her silver-corded  
 speeches  
 To commix my words and laughter  
 with the converse and the jest,  
 Oft I sat apart, and, gazing on the  
 river through the beeches,  
 Heard, as pure the swans swam down  
 it, her pure voice o'erfloat the  
 rest.

## XXIII.

In the morning, horn of huntsman,  
hoof of steed, and laugh of rider,  
Spread out cheery from the courtyard  
till we lost them in the hills;  
While herself and other ladies, and  
her suitors left beside her,  
Went a-wandering up the gardens,  
through the laurels and abeles.

## XXIV.

Thus, her foot upon the new-mown  
grass, bareheaded, with the  
flowing  
Of the virginal white vesture gath-  
ered closely to her throat,  
And the golden ringlets in her neck  
just quickened by her going,  
And appearing to breathe sun for air,  
and doubting if to float, —

## XXV.

With a bunch of dewy maple which  
her right hand held above her,  
And which trembled, a green shadow,  
in betwixt her and the skies,  
As she turned her face in going, thus,  
she drew me on to love her,  
And to worship the divineness of the  
smile hid in her eyes.

## XXVI.

For her eyes alone smile constantly;  
her lips have serious sweetness,  
And her front is calm; the dimple  
rarely ripples on the cheek;  
But her deep blue eyes smile constant-  
ly, as if they in discreetness  
Kept the secret of a happy dream she  
did not care to speak.

## XXVII.

Thus she drew me, the first morning,  
out across into the garden,  
And I walked among her noble  
friends, and could not keep be-  
hind.  
Spake she unto all and unto me, "Be-  
hold, I am the warden  
Of the song-birds in these lindens,  
which are cages to their mind.

## XXVIII.

"But within this swarded circle into  
which the lime-walk brings us,  
Whence the beeches, rounded greenly,  
stand away in reverent fear,

I will let no music enter, saving what  
the fountain sings us,  
Which the lilies round the basin may  
seem pure enough to hear.

## XXIX.

"The live air that waves the lilies  
waves the slender jet of water,  
Like a holy thought sent feebly up  
from soul of fasting saint:  
Whereby lies a marble Silence sleep-  
ing (Lough the sculptor wrought  
her,)  
So asleep she is forgetting to say  
'Hush!' — a fancy quaint.

## XXX.

"Mark how heavy white her eyelids!  
not a dream between them lin-  
gers;  
And the left hand's index droppeth  
from the lips upon the cheek;  
While the right hand, with the sym-  
bol-rose held slack within the  
fingers,  
Has fallen backward in the basin, —  
yet this Silence will not speak!

## XXXI.

"That the essential meaning growing  
may exceed the special symbol,  
Is the thought as I conceive it: it ap-  
plies more high and low.  
Our true noblemen will often through  
right nobleness grow humble,  
And assert an inward honor by deny-  
ing outward show."

## XXXII.

"Nay, your Silence," said I, "truly,  
holds her symbol-rose but  
slackly;  
Yet *she holds it*, or would scarcely be  
a Silence to our ken:  
And your nobles wear their ermine  
on the outside, or walk blackly  
In the presence of the social law as  
mere ignoble men.

## XXXIII.

"Let the poets dream such dreaming!  
madam, in these British islands  
'Tis the substance that wanes ever,  
'tis the symbol that exceeds.

Soon we shall have nought but symbol;  
and, for statues like this Silence,  
Shall accept the rose's image — in another  
case, the weed's."

## XXXIV.

"Not so quickly," she retorted: "I  
confess, where'er you go, you  
Find for things, names — shows for  
actions, and pure gold for honor  
clear:  
But, when all is run to symbol in the  
social, I will throw you  
The world's book which now reads  
dryly, and sit down with Silence  
here."

## XXXV.

Half in playfulness she spoke, I  
thought, and half in indignation:  
Friends who listened, laughed her  
words off, while her lovers  
deemed her fair. —  
A fair woman, flushed with feeling, in  
her noble-lighted station  
Near the statue's white reposing and  
both bathed in sunny air!

## XXXVI.

With the trees round, not so distant  
but you heard their vernal murmur,  
And beheld in light and shadow the  
leaves in and outward move,  
And the little fountain leaping toward  
the sun-heart to be warmer,  
Then recoiling in a tremble from the  
too much light above.

## XXXVII.

'Tis a picture for remembrance. And  
thus, morning after morning,  
Did I follow as she drew me by the  
spirit to her feet.  
Why, her greyhound followed also!  
dogs — we both were dogs for  
scorning —  
To be sent back when she pleased it  
and her path lay through the  
wheat.

## XXXVIII.

And thus, morning after morning,  
spite of vows, and spite of sorrow,  
Did I follow at her drawing, while the  
week-days passed along,

Just to feed the swans this noontide,  
or to see the fawns to-morrow,  
Or to teach the hillside echo some  
sweet Tusean in a song.

## XXXIX.

Ay; for sometimes on the hillside,  
while we sate down in the  
gowans,  
With the forest green behind us, and  
its shadow cast before,  
And the river running under, and  
across it, from the rowans,  
A brown partridge whirring near us  
till we felt the air it bore, —

## XL.

There, obedient to her praying, did I  
read aloud the poems  
Made to Tuscan flutes, or instruments  
more various of our own;  
Read the pastoral parts of Spenser, or  
the subtle interflowings  
Found in Petrarch's sonnets — here's  
the book, the leaf is folded  
down!

## XLI.

Or at times a modern volume, Words-  
worth's solemn-thoughted idyl,  
Howitt's ballad-verse, or Tennyson's  
enchanted revery,  
Or from Browning some "Pomegran-  
ate," which, if cut deep down  
the middle,  
Shows a heart within blood-tinctured,  
of a veined humanity.

## XLII.

Or at times I read there hoarsely  
some new poem of my making:  
Poets ever fail in reading their own  
verses to their worth;  
For the echo in you breaks upon the  
words which you are speaking,  
And the chariot-wheels jar in the gate  
through which you drive them  
forth.

## XLIII.

After, when we were grown tired of  
books, the silence round us  
flinging  
A slow arm of sweet compression, felt  
with beatings at the breast,  
She would break out on a sudden in  
a gush of woodland singing,  
Like a child's emotion in a god, — a  
naiad tired of rest.

## XLIV.

Oh to see or hear her singing! scarce  
I know which is divinest,  
For her looks sing too—she modu-  
lates her gestures on the tune,  
And her mouth stirs with the song,  
like song; and, when the notes  
are finest,  
'Tis the eyes that shoot out vocal  
light, and seem to swell them  
on.

## XLV.

Then we talked—oh, how we talked!  
her voice, so cadenced in the  
talking,  
Made another singing—of the soul!  
a music without bars:  
While the leafy sounds of woodlands,  
humming round where we were  
walking,  
Brought interposition worthy-sweet,  
as skies about the stars.

## XLVI.

And she spake such good thoughts  
natural, as if she always thought  
them;  
She had sympathies so rapid, open,  
free as bird on branch,  
Just as ready to fly east as west,  
whichever way besought them.  
In the birchen-wood a chirrup, or a  
cock-erow in the grange.

## XLVII.

In her utmost lightness there is truth,  
and often she speaks lightly,  
Has a grace in being gay which even  
mournful souls approve;  
For the root of some grave earnest  
thought is understruck so right-  
ly  
As to justify the foliage and the wav-  
ing flowers above.

## XLVIII.

And she talked on—*we* talked, rather!  
upon all things,—substance,  
shadow,  
Of the sheep that browsed the grasses,  
of the reapers in the corn,  
Of the little children from the schools,  
seen winding through the mead-  
ow,  
Of the poor rich world beyond them,  
still kept poorer by its scorn.

## XLIX.

So of men, and so, of letters—books  
are men of higher stature,  
And the only men that speak aloud  
for future times to hear;  
So, of mankind in the abstract, which  
grows slowly into nature.  
Yet will lift the cry of "progress," as  
it trod from sphere to sphere.

## L.

And her custom was to praise me  
when I said, "The age culls sim-  
ples,  
With a broad clown's back turned  
broadly to the glory of the stars.  
We are gods by our own reek'ning,  
and may well shut up the tem-  
ples,  
And wield on, amid the incense-  
steam, the thunder of our cars.

## LI.

"For we throw out acclamations of  
self-thanking, self-admiring,  
With, at every mile run faster, 'Oh  
the wondrous, wondrous age!'"  
Little thinking if we work our souls  
as nobly as our iron,  
Or if angels will commend us at the  
goal of pilgrimage.

## LII.

"Why, what *is* this patient entrance  
into Nature's deep resources  
But the child's most gradual learning  
to walk upright without bane?  
When we drive out from the cloud of  
steam majestic white horses,  
Are we greater than the first men  
who led black ones by the mane?"

## LIII.

"If we trod the deeps of ocean, if we  
struck the stars in rising,  
If we wrapped the globe intensely  
with one hot electric breath,  
'Twere but power within our tether,  
No new spirit-power comprising,  
And in life we were not greater men,  
nor bolder men in death."

## LIV.

She was patient with my talking; and  
I loved her, loved her certes  
As I loved all heavenly objects, with  
uplifted eyes and hands;

As I loved pure inspirations, loved  
the graces, loved the virtues,  
In a Love content with writing his  
own name on desert sands.

## LV.

Or at least I thought so, purely;  
thought no idiot hope was rais-  
ing  
Any crown to crown Love's silence,  
silent Love that sate alone.  
Out, alas! the stag is like me, — he  
that tries to go on grazing  
With the great deep gun-wound in  
his neck, then reels with sud-  
den moan.

## LVI.

It was thus I reeled. I told you that  
her hand had many suitors;  
But she smiles them down imperially,  
as Venus did the waves.  
And with such a gracious coldness,  
that they cannot press their fu-  
tures  
On the present of her courtesy, which  
yieldingly enslaves.

## LVII.

And this morning, as I sat alone with-  
in the inner chamber  
With the great saloon beyond it, lost  
in pleasant thought serene,  
For I had been reading Camoens,  
that poem, you remember,  
Which his lady's eyes are praised in  
as the sweetest ever seen.

## LVIII.

And the book lay open; and my  
thought flew from it, taking  
from it  
A vibration and impulsion to an end  
beyond its own,  
As the branch of a green osier, when  
a child would overcome it,  
Springs up freely from his claspings,  
and goes swinging in the sun.

## LIX.

As I mused I heard a murmur: it  
grew deep as it grew longer,  
Speakers using earnest language —  
"Lady Geraldine, you *would!*"  
And I heard a voice that pleaded  
ever on in accents stronger,  
As a sense of reason gave it power to  
make its rhetoric good.

## LX.

Well I knew that voice: it was an  
earl's, of soul that matched his  
station, —  
Soul completed into lordship, might  
and right read on his brow;  
Very finely courteous: far too proud  
to doubt his domination  
Of the common people, he atones for  
grandeur by a bow.

## LXI.

High straight forehead, nose of eagle,  
cold blue eyes of less expression  
Than resistance, coldly casting off  
the looks of other men,  
As steel, arrows; unelastic lips, which  
seem to taste possession,  
And be cautious lest the common air  
should injure or distract.

## LXII.

For the rest, accomplished, upright,  
ay, and standing by his order  
With a bearing not ungraceful; fond  
of art and letters too;  
Just a good man made a proud man.  
—as the sandy rocks that border  
A wild coast, by circumstances, in a  
regnant ebb and flow.

## LXIII.

Thus, I knew that voice, I heard it,  
and I could not help the heark-  
ening;  
In the room I stood up blindly, and  
my burning heart within  
Seemed to seethe and fuse my senses  
till they ran on all sides dark-  
ening,  
And scorched, weighed like melted  
metal round my feet that stood  
therein.

## LXIV.

And that voice, I heard it pleading,  
for love's sake, for wealth, posi-  
tion,  
For the sake of liberal uses, and great  
actions to be done —  
And she interrupted gently, "Nay,  
my lord, the old tradition  
Of your Normans, by some worthier  
hand than mine is, should be  
won."

## LXV.

"Ah, that white hand!" he said quickly; and in his he either drew it  
Or attempted, for with gravity and instance she replied,  
"Nay, indeed, my lord, this talk is vain, and we had best eschew it, And pass on, like friends, to other points less easy to decide."

## LXVI.

What he said again, I know not: it is likely that his trouble Worked his pride up to the surface, for she answered in slow scorn, "And your lordship judges rightly. Whom I marry, shall be noble, Ay, and wealthy. I shall never blush to think how he was born."

## LXVII.

There I maddened. Her words stung me. Life swept through me into fever,  
And my soul sprang up astonished, — sprang full-statured in an hour. Know you what it is when anguish with apocalyptic NEVER  
To a Pythian height dilates you, and despair sublimes to power?

## LXVIII.

From my brain the soul-wings budded, waved a flame about my body,  
Whence conventions coiled to ashes. I felt self-drawn out, as man,  
From amalgamate false natures, and I saw the skies grow ruddy  
With the deepening feet of angels, and I knew what spirits cau.

## LXIX.

I was mad, inspired, say either! (anguish worketh inspiration)  
Was a man or beast — perhaps so, for the tiger roars when speared;  
And I walked on step by step along the level of my passion —  
Oh my soul! and passed the doorway to her face, and never feared.

## LXX.

*He* had left her, peradventure, when my footstep proved my coming;  
But for *her* — she half arose, then sate, grew scarlet, and grew pale.  
Oh, she trembled! 'tis so always with a worldly man or woman  
In the presence of true spirits: what else *can* they do but quail?

## LXXI.

Oh! she fluttered like a tame bird in among its forest brothers  
Far too strong for it; then drooping, bowed her face upon her hands;  
And I spake out wildly, fiercely, brutal truths of her and others:  
*I*, she planted in the desert, swathed her, windlike, with my sands.

## LXXII.

I plucked up her social fictions, bloody-rooted, though leaf-verdant,  
Trode them down with words of shaming, — all the purple and the gold,  
All the "landed stakes" and lordships, — all that spirits pure and ardent  
Are cast out of love and honor because chancing not to hold.

## LXXIII.

"For myself I do not argue," said I, "though I love you, madam,  
But for better souls that nearer to the height of yours have trod:  
And this age shows, to my thinking, still more infidels to Adam,  
Than, directly by profession, simple infidels to God.

## LXXIV.

"Yet, O God!" I said, "O grave!" I said, "O mother's heart and bosom!  
With whom first and last are equal, saint and corpse and little child,  
We are fools to your deductions in these figments of heart closing;  
We are traitors to your causes in these sympathies defiled.

## LXXV.

"Learn more reverence, madam, not  
for rank or wealth, *that* needs no  
learning, —  
*That* comes quickly, quick as sin does,  
ay, and culminates to sin, —  
But for Adam's seed, MAN! Trust me,  
'tis a clay above your scorning,  
With God's image stamped upon it,  
and God's kindling breath with-  
in.

## LXXVI.

"What right have you, madam, gaz-  
ing in your palace mirror daily,  
Getting so by heart your beauty which  
all others must adore,  
While you draw the golden ringlets  
down your fingers, to vow gayly  
You will wed no man that's only good  
to God, and nothing more?"

## LXXVII.

"Why, what right have you, made  
fair by that same God, the  
sweetest woman  
Of all women he has fashioned, with  
your lovely spirit-face,  
Which would seem too near to vanish,  
if its smile were not so human,  
And your voice of holy sweetness,  
turning common words to grace,

## LXXVIII.

"What right *can* you have, God's  
other works to scorn, despise,  
revile them,  
In the gross, as mere men, broadly,  
not as *noble* men, forsooth;  
As mere pariahs of the outer world,  
forbidden to assoil them  
In the hope of living, dying, near that  
sweetness of your mouth?"

## LXXIX.

"Have you any answer, madam? If  
my spirit were less earthly,  
If its instrument were gifted with a  
better silver string,  
I would kneel down where I stand,  
and say, 'Behold me! I am  
worthy  
Of thy loving, for I love thee. I am  
worthy as a king.'

## LXXX.

'As it is, your ermined pride I swear,  
shall feel this stain upon her.  
That *I*, poor, weak, tost with passion,  
scorned by me and you again.  
Love you, madam, dare to love you,  
to my grief and your dishonor.  
To my endless desolation, and your  
impotent disdain."

## LXXXI.

More mad words like these, — mere  
madness! friend. I need not  
write them fuller,  
For I hear my hot soul dropping on  
the lines in showers of tears.  
Oh, a woman! friend, a woman! why,  
a beast had scarce been duller  
Than roar bestial loud complaints  
against the shining of the  
spheres.

## LXXXII.

But at last there came a pause. I  
stood all vibrating with thunder  
Which my soul had used. The silence  
drew her face up like a call.  
Could you guess what word she ut-  
tered? She looked up, as if in  
wonder,  
With tears beaded on her lashes, and  
said, "Bertram!" it was all.

## LXXXIII.

If she had cursed me, — and she might  
have, — or if even, with queenly  
bearing  
Which at need is used by women, she  
had risen up and said,  
"Sir, you are my guest, and therefore  
I have given you a full hearing:  
Now, beseech you, choose a name ex-  
acting somewhat less, instead,"

## LXXXIV.

I had borne it: but that "Bertram" —  
why, it lies there on the paper,  
A mere word, without her accent, and  
you cannot judge the weight  
Of the calm which crushed my pas-  
sion. I seemed drowning in a  
vapor,  
And her gentleness destroyed me,  
whom her scorn made desolate.



## LXXXV.

So, struck backward and exhausted  
by that inward flow of passion,  
Which had rushed on, sparing nothing,  
into forms of abstract truth,  
By a logic agonizing through unseemly  
demonstration,  
And by youth's own anguish turning  
grimly gray the hairs of youth,

## LXXXVI.

By the sense accursed and instant,  
that, if even I spake wisely,  
I spake basely — using truth, if what I  
spake indeed was true,  
To avenge wrong on a woman — *her*,  
who sate there weighing nicely  
A poor manhood's worth, found guilty  
of such deeds as I could do! —

## LXXXVII.

By such wrong and woe exhausted —  
what I suffered and occasioned,  
As a wild horse through a city runs  
with lightning in his eyes,  
And then dashing at a church's cold  
and passive wall, impassioned,  
Strikes the death into his burning  
brain, and blindly drops and  
dies —

## LXXXVIII.

So I fell, struck down before her —  
do you blame me, friend, for  
weakness?  
'Twas my strength of passion slew  
me — fell before her like a  
stone;  
Fast the dreadful world rolled from  
me on its roaring wheels of  
blackness:  
When the light came, I was lying in  
this chamber, and alone.

## LXXXIX.

Oh, of course she charged her lackeys  
to bear out the sickly burden,  
And to cast it from her scornful sight,  
but not *beyond* the gate:  
She is too kind to be cruel, and too  
haughty not to pardon  
Such a man as I: 'twere something to  
be level to her hate.

## XC.

But for me — you now are conscious  
why, my friend, I write this letter,  
How my life is read all backward, and  
the charm of life undone.  
I shall leave her house at dawn, — I  
would to-night, if I were better, —  
And I charge my soul to hold my body  
strengthened for the sun.

## XCI.

When the sun has dyed the oriel, I  
depart, with no last gazes,  
No weak moanings (one word only,  
left in writing for her hands),  
Out of reach of all derision, and some  
unavailing praises,  
To make front against this anguish in  
the far and foreign lands.

## XCII.

Blame me not. I would not squander  
life in grief — I am abstemious.  
I but nurse my spirit's falcon that its  
wing may soar again.  
There's no room for tears of weak-  
ness in the blind eyes of a Phe-  
mius:  
Into work the poet kneads them, and  
he does not die *till then*.

## CONCLUSION.

## I.

BERTRAM finished the last pages,  
while along the silence ever,  
Still in hot and heavy splashes, fell  
the tears on every leaf.  
Having ended, he leans backward in  
his chair, with lips that quiver  
From the deep unspoken, ay, and  
deep unwritten, thoughts of  
grief.

## II.

Soh! How still the lady standeth!  
'Tis a dream, — a dream of mercies!  
'Twixt the purple lattice-curtains how  
she standeth still and pale!  
'Tis a vision, sure, of mercies sent to  
soften his self curses,  
Sent to sweep a patient quiet o'er the  
tossing of his wail.

## III.

"Eyes," he said, "now throbbing  
through me, are ye eyes that  
did undo me?—  
Shining eyes, like antique jewels set  
in Parian statue-stone!  
Underneath that calm white forehead  
are ye ever burning torrid  
O'er the desolate sand-desert of my  
heart and life undone?"

## IV.

With a murmurous stir uncertain, in  
the air the purple curtain  
Swelleth in and swelleth out around  
her motionless pale brows,  
While the gliding of the river sends a  
rippling noise forever  
Through the open casement whitened  
by the moonlight's slant repose.

## V.

Said he, "Vision of a lady, stand  
there silent, stand there steady!  
Now I see it plainly, plainly, now I  
cannot hope or doubt—  
There, the brows of mild repression;  
there, the lips of silent passion,  
Curvèd like an archer's bow to send  
the bitter arrows out."

## VI.

Ever, evermore the while, in a slow  
silence she kept smiling,  
And approached him slowly, slowly,  
in a gliding, measured pace,  
With her two white hands extended,  
as if, praying one offended,  
And a look of supplication gazing  
earnest in his face.

## VII.

Said he, "Wake me by no gesture,  
sound of breath, or stir of ves-  
ture!  
Let the blessèd apparition melt not  
yet to its divine!"

No approaching — hush, no breathing,  
or my heart must swoon to  
death in  
The too utter life thou bringest, O  
thou dream of Geraldine!"

## VIII.

Ever, evermore the while, in a slow  
silence she kept smiling;  
But the tears ran over lightly from  
her eyes, and tenderly:—  
"Dost thou, Bertram, truly love me?  
Is no woman far above me  
Found more worthy of thy poet-heart  
than such a one as I?"

## IX.

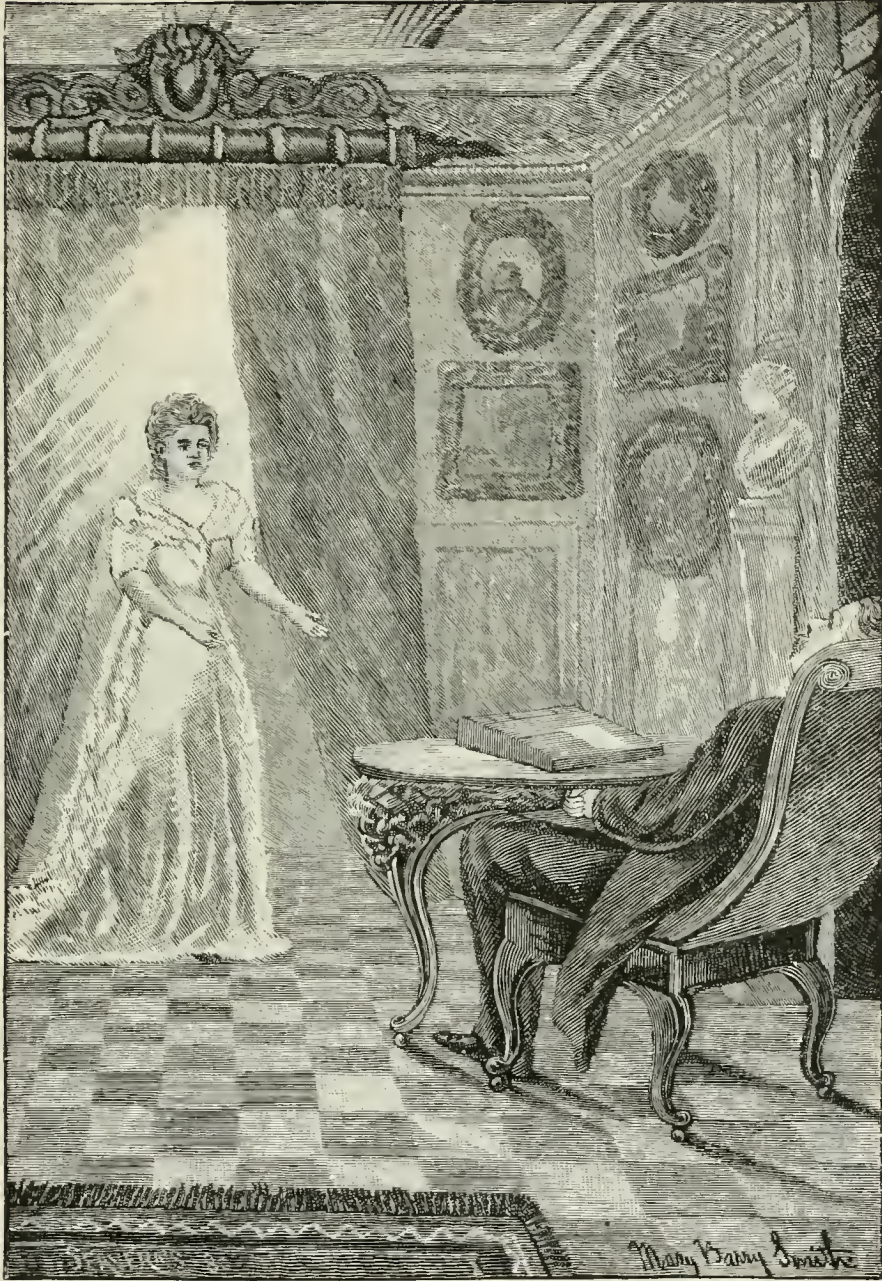
Said he, "I would dream so ever,  
like the flowing of that river,  
Flowing ever in a shadow greenly  
onward to the sea!  
So, thou vision of all sweetness,  
princely to a full complete-  
ness,  
Would my heart and life flow on-  
ward, deathward, through this  
dream of THEE!"

## X.

Ever, evermore the while, in a slow  
silence she kept smiling,  
While the silver tears ran faster down  
the blushing of her cheeks;  
Then, with both her hands infolding  
both of his, she softly told him,  
"Bertram, if I say I love thee, . . .  
'tis the vision only speaks."

## XI.

Softened, quickened to adore her, on  
his knee he fell before her;  
And she whispered low in triumph,  
"It shall be as I have sworn.  
Very rich he is in virtues, very noble,  
— noble, certes;  
And I shall not blush in knowing  
that men call him lowly born."



“And approached him slowly, slowly, in a gliding, measured pace.” — Page 316.

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## THE RUNAWAY SLAVE AT PILGRIM'S POINT.

### I.

I STAND on the mark beside the shore  
Of the first white pilgrim's bended  
knee,  
Where exile turned to ancestor,  
And God was thanked for liberty.  
I have run through the night, my skin  
is as dark,  
I bend my knee down on this mark:  
I look on the sky and the sea.

### II.

O pilgrim-souls, I speak to you!  
I see you come proud and slow  
From the land of the spirits pale as  
dew,  
And round me, and round me, ye go.  
O pilgrims! I have gasped and run  
All night long from the whips of one,  
Who, in your names, works sin and  
woe.

### III.

And thus I thought that I would come,  
And kneel here where ye knelt be-  
fore,  
And feel your souls around me hum  
In undertone to the ocean's roar,  
And lift my black face, my black hand,  
Here, in your names, to curse this  
land  
Ye blessed in freedom's, evermore.

### IV.

I am black, I am black;  
And yet God made me, they say:  
But, if he did so, smiling back  
He must have cast his work away  
Under the feet of his white creatures,  
With a look of scorn, that the dusky  
features  
Might be trodden again to clay.

### V.

And yet he has made dark things  
To be glad and merry as light:  
There's a little dark bird sits and  
sings;  
There's a dark stream ripples out  
of sight;  
And the dark frogs chant in the safe  
morass;  
And the sweetest stars are made to  
pass  
O'er the face of the darkest night.

### VI.

But *we* who are dark, we are dark!  
Ah God, we have no stars!  
About our souls in care and cark  
Our blackness shuts like prison-  
bars:  
The poor souls crouch so far behind  
That never a comfort can they find  
By reaching through the prison-bars.

### VII.

Indeed, we live beneath the sky,  
That great smooth hand of God  
stretched out  
On all his children fatherly,  
To save them from the dread and  
doubt  
Which would be, if, from this low  
place,  
All opened straight up to his face  
Into the grand eternity.

### VIII.

And still God's sunshine and his frost,  
They make us hot, they make us  
cold,  
As if we were not black and lost;  
And the beasts and birds in wood  
and fold

Do fear, and take us for very men:  
 Could the weep-poor-will or the cat  
 of the glen  
 Look into my eyes, and be bold ?

## IX.

I am black, I am black !  
 But once I laughed in girlish glee,  
 For one of my color stood in the track  
 Where the drivers drove, and  
 looked at me;  
 And tender and full was the look he  
 gave:  
 Could a slave look *so* at another slave ?  
 I look at the sky and the sea.

## X.

And from that hour our spirits grew  
 As free as if unsold, unbought:  
 Oh, strong enough, since we were two.  
 To conquer the world, we thought !  
 The drivers drove us day by day:  
 We did not mind, we went one way,  
 And no better a freedom sought.

## XI.

In the sunny ground between the  
 canes,  
 He said, "I love you," as he passed:  
 When the shingle-roof rang sharp with  
 the rains.  
 I heard how he vowed it fast;  
 While others shook, he smiled in the  
 hut,  
 As he carved me a bowl of the cocoa-  
 nut,  
 Through the roar of the hurricanes.

## XII.

I sang his name instead of a song,  
 Over and over I sang his name;  
 Upward and downward I drew it  
 along  
 My various notes, — the same, the  
 same !  
 I sang it low, that the slave-girls near  
 Might never guess from aught they  
 could hear  
 It was only a name — a name.

## XIII.

I look on the sky and the sea.  
 We were two to love, and two to  
 pray,  
 Yes, two, O God, who cried to thee,  
 Though nothing didst thou say!

Coldly thou sat'st behind the sun;  
 And now I cry, who am but one,  
 Thou wilt not speak to-day.

## XIV.

We were black, we were black !  
 We had no claim to love and bliss;  
 What marvel if each went to wrack ?  
 They wrung my cold hands out of  
 his,  
 They dragged him — where ? I  
 crawled to touch  
 His blood's mark in the dust . . . not  
 much,  
 Ye pilgrim-souls, though plain as  
*this !*

## XV.

Wrong, followed by a deeper wrong !  
 Mere grief's too good for such as I:  
 So the white men brought the shame  
 ere long  
 To strangle the sob of my agony.  
 They would not leave me for my dull  
 Wet eyes! — it was too merciful  
 To let me weep pure tears, and die.

## XVI.

I am black, I am black !  
 I wore a child upon my breast,  
 An amulet that hung too slack,  
 And in my unrest could not rest:  
 Thus we went moaning, child and  
 mother,  
 One to another, one to another.  
 Until all ended for the best.

## XVII.

For hark! I will tell you low, low,  
 I am black, you see;  
 And the babe who lay on my bosom so  
 Was far too white, too white for  
 me, —  
 As white as the ladies who scorned to  
 pray  
 Beside me at church but yesterday,  
 Though my tears had washed a  
 place for my knee.

## XVIII.

My own, own child ! I could not bear  
 To look in his face, it was so white:  
 I covered him up with a kerchief  
 there,  
 I covered his face in close and tight;

And he moaned and struggled, as well  
might be,  
For the white child wanted his liber-  
ty —  
Ha, ha ! he wanted the master-right.

## XIX.

He moaned, and beat with his head  
and feet, —  
His little feet that never grew;  
He struck them out, as it was meet,  
Against my heart to break it  
through.  
I might have sung and made him  
mild;  
But I dared not sing to the white-  
faced child  
The only song I knew.

## XX.

I pulled the kerchief very close:  
He could not see the sun, I swear,  
More then alive, than now he does  
From between the roots of the man-  
go . . . where ?  
I know where. Close ! A child and  
mother  
Do wrong to look at one another,  
When one is black, and one is fair.

## XXI.

Why, in that single glance I had  
Of my child's face . . . I tell you  
all,  
I saw a look that made me mad ! —  
The *master's* look, that used to fall  
On my soul like his lash . . . or  
worse !  
And so, to save it from my curse,  
I twisted it round in my shawl.

## XXII.

And he moaned, and trembled from  
foot to head,  
He shivered from head to foot;  
Till, after a time, he lay instead  
Too suddenly still and mute.  
I felt, beside, a stiffening cold;  
I dared to lift up just a fold,  
As in lifting a leaf of the mango-  
fruit.

## XXIII.

But *my* fruit . . . ha, ha ! — there had  
been  
(I laugh to think on't at this hour !)  
Your fine white angels (who have seen  
Nearest the secret of God's power)

And plucked my fruit to make them  
wine,  
And sucked the soul of that child of  
mine  
As the humming-bird sucks the  
soul of the flower.

## XXIV.

Ha, ha, the trick of the angels white !  
They freed the white child's spirit  
so.  
I said not a word, but day and night  
I carried the body to and fro,  
And it lay on my heart like a stone,  
as chill.  
— The sun may shine out as much as  
he will:  
I am cold, though it happened a  
month ago.

## XXV.

From the white man's house, and the  
black man's hut,  
I carried the little body on;  
The forest's arms did round us shut,  
And silence through the trees did  
run:  
They asked no question as I went,  
They stood too high for astonishment:  
They could see God sit on his  
throne.

## XXVI.

My little body, kerchiefed fast,  
I bore it on through the forest, on;  
And when I felt it was tired at last,  
I scooped a hole beneath the moon:  
Through the forest-tops the angels far,  
With a white sharp finger from every  
star,  
Did point and mock at what was  
done.

## XXVII.

Yet when it was all done aright, —  
Earth 'twixt me and my baby  
strewed. —  
All changed to black earth, — noth-  
ing white. —  
A dark child in the dark ! — ensued  
Some comfort, and my heart grew  
young:  
I sate down smiling there, and sung  
The song I learnt in my maiden-  
hood.

## XXVIII.

And thus we two were reconciled, —  
 The white child and black mother,  
 thus ;  
 For, as I sang it soft and wild,  
 The same song, more melodious,  
 Rose from the grave whereon I sate :  
 It was the dead child singing that,  
 To join the souls of both of us.

## XXIX.

Look on the sea and the sky,  
 Where the pilgrims' ships first  
 anchored lay  
 The free sun rideth gloriously,  
 But the pilgrim-ghosts have slid  
 away  
 Through the earliest streaks of the  
 morn:  
 My face is black; but it glares with a  
 scorn  
 Which they dare not meet by day.

## XXX.

Ha! — in their stead their hunter  
 sons !  
 Ha, ha ! they are on me — they hunt  
 in a ring !  
 Keep off ! I brave you all at once,  
 I throw off your eyes like snakes  
 that sting !  
 You have killed the black eagle at  
 nest, I think:  
 Did you ever stand still in your tri-  
 umph, and shrink  
 From the stroke of her wounded  
 wing ?

## XXXI.

(Man, drop that stone you dared to  
 lift !)  
 I wish you who stand there five  
 abreast,  
 Each for his own wife's joy and gift,  
 A little corpse as safely at rest  
 As mine in the mangoes ! Yes, but  
*she*  
 May keep live babies on her knee,  
 And sing the song she likes the  
 best.

## XXXII.

I am not mad: I am black !  
 I see you staring in my face —  
 I know you staring, shrinking back,  
 Ye are born of the Washington-  
 race,

And this land is the free America,  
 And this mark on my wrist — (I prove  
 what I say)  
 Ropes tied me up here to the flog-  
 ging-place.

## XXXIII.

You think I shrieked then? Not a  
 sound !  
 I hung, as a gourd hangs in the  
 sun;  
 I only cursed them all around  
 As softly as I might have done  
 My very own child: from these sands  
 Up to the mountains, lift your hands,  
 O slaves, and end what I begun !

## XXXIV.

Whips, curses: these must answer  
 those !  
 For in this UNION you have set  
 Two kinds of men in adverse rows,  
 Each loathing each, and all forget  
 The seven wounds in Christ's body  
 fair,  
 While HE sees gaping everywhere  
 Our countless wounds that pay no  
 debt.

## XXXV.

Our wounds are different. Your  
 white men  
 Are, after all, not gods indeed,  
 Nor able to make Christs again  
 Do good with bleeding. We who  
 bleed  
 (Stand off ! ) we help not in our loss !  
 We are too heavy for our cross,  
 And fall and crush you and your  
 seed.

## XXXVI.

I fall, I swoon ! I look at the sky.  
 The clouds are breaking on my  
 brain.  
 I am floated along, as if I should die  
 Of liberty's exquisite pain.  
 In the name of the white child wait-  
 ing for me  
 In the death-dark, where we may kiss  
 and agree,  
 White men, I leave you all curse-free  
 In my broken heart's disdain.



## THE CRY OF THE CHILDREN.

“Φεῦ, φεῦ, τι προσδερχεσθε μ’ ομμασιν, τέκνα;” — ΜΕΔΕΑ.

### I.

Do ye hear the children weeping, O  
my brothers,  
Ere the sorrow comes with years?  
They are leaning their young heads  
against their mothers,  
And *that* cannot stop their tears.  
The young lambs are bleating in the  
meadows;  
The young birds are chirping in the  
nest;  
The young fawns are playing with the  
shadows;  
The young flowers are blowing  
— toward the west:  
But the young, young children, O my  
brothers!  
They are weeping bitterly.  
They are weeping in the playtime of  
the others,  
In the country of the free.

### II.

Do you question the young children  
in the sorrow,  
Why their tears are falling so?  
The old man may weep for his to-  
morrow  
Which is lost in long ago;  
The old tree is leafless in the forest;  
The old year is ending in the frost;  
The old wound, if stricken, is the  
sorest;  
The old hope is hardest to be lost:  
But the young, young children, O my  
brothers!  
Do you ask them why they stand  
Weeping sore before the bosoms of  
their mothers,  
In our happy fatherland?

### III.

They look up with their pale and  
sunken faces;  
And their looks are sad to see,  
For the man's hoary anguish draws  
and presses  
Down the cheeks of infancy.

“Your old earth,” they say, “is very  
dreary;  
Our young feet,” they say, “are  
very weak;  
Few paces have we taken, yet are weary;  
Our grave-rest is very far to seek.  
Ask the aged why they weep, and not  
the children;  
For the outside earth is cold.  
And we young ones stand without in  
our bewildering,  
And the graves are for the old.”

### IV.

“True,” say the children, “it may  
happen  
That we die before our time:  
Little Alice died last year; her grave  
is shapen  
Like a snowball in the rime.  
We looked into the pit prepared to  
take her:  
Was no room for any work in the  
close clay;  
From the sleep wherein she lieth,  
none will wake her,  
Crying, ‘Get up, little Alice! it is day.’  
If you listen by that grave, in sun and  
shower,  
With your ear down, little Alice  
never cries.  
Could we see her face, be sure we  
should not know her,  
For the smile has time for growing  
in her eyes;  
And merry go her moments, lulled  
and stilled in  
The shroud by the kirk-chime.  
It is good when it happens,” say the  
children,  
“That we die before our time.”

### V.

Alas, alas, the children! They are  
seeking  
Death in life, as best to have.  
They are binding up their hearts away  
from breaking,  
With a cerement from the grave.

Go out, children, from the mine and  
 from the city;  
 Sing out, children, as the little  
 thrushes do;  
 Pluck your handfuls of the meadow-  
 cowslips pretty;  
 Laugh aloud, to feel your fingers let  
 them through.  
 But they answer, "Are your cowslips  
 of the meadows  
 Like our weeds anear the mine?  
 Leave us quiet in the dark of the coal-  
 shadows,  
 From your pleasures fair and fine.

## VI.

"For oh!" say the children, "we are  
 weary,  
 And we cannot run or leap:  
 If we cared for any meadows, it were  
 merely  
 To drop down in them, and sleep.  
 Our knees tremble sorely in the stoop-  
 ing;  
 We fall upon our faces, trying to go;  
 And, underneath our heavy eyelids  
 drooping,  
 The reddest flower would look as  
 pale as snow;  
 For all day we drag our burden tiring,  
 Through the coal-dark, under-  
 ground;  
 Or all day we drive the wheels of iron  
 In the factories, round and round.

## VII.

"For all day the wheels are droning,  
 turning;  
 Their wind comes in our faces,  
 Till our hearts turn, our heads with  
 pulses burning,  
 And the walls turn in their places.  
 Turns the sky in the high window  
 blank and reeling,  
 Turns the long light that drops  
 adown the wall,  
 Turn the black flies that crawl along  
 the ceiling, —  
 All are turning, all the day, and we  
 with all.  
 And all day the iron wheels are dron-  
 ing,  
 And sometimes we could pray,  
 'O ye wheels' (breaking out in a mad  
 moaning),  
 'Stop! be silent for to-day!'"

## VIII.

Ay, be silent! Let them hear each  
 other breathing  
 For a moment, mouth to mouth;  
 Let them touch each other's hands, in  
 a fresh wreathing  
 Of their tender human youth;  
 Let them feel that this cold metallic  
 motion  
 Is not all the life God fashions or  
 reveals;  
 Let them prove their living souls  
 against the notion  
 That they live in you, or under you,  
 O wheels!  
 Still, all day, the iron wheels go onward,  
 Grinding life down from its mark;  
 And the children's souls, which God  
 is calling sunward,  
 Spin on blindly in the dark.

## IX.

Now tell the poor young children, O  
 my brothers.  
 To look up to Him, and pray;  
 So the blessed One who blesseth all  
 the others  
 Will bless them another day.  
 They answer, "Who is God, that he  
 should hear us  
 While the rushing of the iron wheels  
 is stirred?  
 When we sob aloud, the human crea-  
 tures near us  
 Pass by, hearing not, or answer not  
 a word;  
 And *we* hear not (for the wheels in  
 their resounding)  
 Strangers speaking at the door.  
 Is it likely God, with angels singing  
 round him,  
 Hears our weeping any more?"

## X.

"Two words, indeed, of praying we  
 remember;  
 And at midnight's hour of harm,  
 'Our Father,' looking upward in the  
 chamber,  
 We say softly for a charm.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A fact rendered pathetically historical by Mr. Horne's report of his commission. The name of the poet, of "Orion" and "Cosmo de' Medici" has, however, a change of associations, and comes in time to remind me that we have some noble poetic heat of literature still, however open to the reproach of being somewhat gelid in our humanity. — 1844.

We know no other words except 'Our Father;  
 And we think, that, in some pause  
 of angels' song,  
 God may pluck them with the silence  
 sweet to gather,  
 And hold both within his right  
 hand, which is strong.  
 'Our Father!' If he heard us, he  
 would surely  
 (For they call him good and mild)  
 Answer, smiling down the steep  
 world very purely,  
 'Come and rest with me, my child.'

## XI.

"But, no!" say the children, weep-  
 ing faster,  
 "He is speechless as a stone;  
 And they tell us, of his image is the  
 master  
 Who commands us to work on.  
 Go to!" say the children, — "up in  
 heaven,  
 Dark, wheel-like, turning clouds  
 are all we find.  
 Do not mock us: grief has made us  
 unbelieving;  
 We look up for God; but tears have  
 made us blind."  
 Do you hear the children weeping and  
 disproving,  
 O my brothers, what ye preach?  
 For God's possible is taught by his  
 world's loving —  
 And the children doubt of each.

## XII.

And well may the children weep be-  
 fore you!  
 They are weary ere they run;  
 They have never seen the sunshine,  
 nor the glory  
 Which is brighter than the sun.  
 They know the grief of man, without  
 its wisdom;  
 They sink in man's despair, without  
 its calm;  
 Are slaves, without the liberty in  
 Christdom;  
 Are martyrs, by the pang without  
 the palm:  
 Are wroth as if with age, yet unre-  
 trievably  
 The harvest of its memories can-  
 not reap;  
 Are orphans of the earthly love and  
 heavenly —  
 Let them weep! let them weep!

## XIII.

They look up with their pale and  
 sunken faces,  
 And their look is dread to see.  
 For they mind you of their angels in  
 high places,  
 With eyes turned on Deity.  
 "How long," they say, "how long,  
 O cruel nation,  
 Will you stand, to move the world  
 on a child's heart, —  
 Stifle down with a mailed heel its pal-  
 pitation,  
 And tread onward to your throne  
 amid the mart?  
 Our blood splashes upward, O gold-  
 heaper,  
 And your purple shows your path!  
 But the child's sob in the silence  
 curses deeper  
 Than the strong man in his  
 wrath."

## A CHILD ASLEEP.

## I.

How he sleepeth, having drunken  
 Weary childhood's mandragore!  
 From its pretty eyes have sunken  
 Pleasures to make room for more;  
 Sleeping near the withered nosegay  
 which he pulled the day before.

## II.

Nosegays! leave them for the wak-  
 ing;  
 Throw them earthward where  
 they grew:  
 Dim are such beside the breaking  
 Amaranths he looks unto:  
 Folded eyes see brighter colors than  
 the open ever do.

## III.

Heaven-flowers rayed by shadows  
 golden  
 From the palms they sprang be-  
 neath,  
 Now, perhaps, divinely holden,  
 Swing against him in a wreath:  
 We may think so from the quicken-  
 ing of his bloom and of his  
 breath.

## IV.

Vision unto vision calleth  
 While the young child dreameth  
 on:  
 Fair, O dreamer, thee befalleth  
 With the glory thou hast won!  
 Darker wast thou in the garden yester-  
 morn by summer-sun.

## V.

We should see the spirits ringing  
 Round thee, were the clouds  
 away:  
 'Tis the child-heart draws them,  
 singing  
 In the silent-seeming clay —  
 Singing! stars that seem the mutest  
 go in music all the way.

## VI.

As the moths around a taper,  
 As the bees around a rose,  
 As the gnats around a vapor,  
 So the spirits group and close  
 Round about a holy childhood as if  
 drinking its repose.

## VII.

Shapes of brightness overlean thee,  
 Flash their diadems of youth  
 On the ringlets which half screen  
 thee,  
 While thou smilest . . . not in  
 sooth  
 Thy smile, but the overfair one, dropt  
 from some ethereal mouth.

## VIII.

Haply it is angels' duty,  
 During slumber, shade by shade  
 To fine down this childish beauty  
 To the thing it must be made  
 Ere the world shall bring it praises,  
 or the tomb shall see it fade.

## IX.

Softly, softly! make no noises!  
 Now he lieth dead and dumb;  
 Now he hears the angels' voices  
 Folding silence in the room;  
 Now he muses deep the meaning of  
 the heaven-words as they come.

## X.

Speak not! he is consecrated;  
 Breathe no breath across his eyes:  
 Lifted up and separated  
 On the hand of God he lies  
 In a sweetness beyond touching held  
 in cloistral sanctities.

## XI.

Could ye bless him, father, mother —  
 Bless the dimple in his cheek?  
 Dare ye look at one another,  
 And the benediction speak?  
 Would ye not break out in weeping,  
 and confess yourselves too  
 weak?

## XII.

He is harmless, ye are sinful;  
 Ye are troubled, he at ease:  
 From his slumber, virtue winful  
 Floweth outward with increase.  
 Dare not bless him! but be blessed by  
 his peace, and go in peace.

## THE FOURFOLD ASPECT.

## I.

WHEN ye stood up in the house  
 With your little childish feet,  
 And, in touching life's first shows,  
 First the touch of love did meet, —  
 Love and nearness seeming one,  
 By the heartlight cast before,  
 And of all beloveds, none  
 Standing farther than the door;  
 Not a name being dear to thought,  
 With its owner beyond eall;  
 Not a face, unless it brought  
 Its own shadow to the wall;  
 When the worst recorded change  
 Was of apple dropt from bough,  
 When love's sorrow seemed more  
 strange  
 Than love's treason can seem  
 now:  
 Then, the Loving took you up  
 Soft, upon their elder knees,  
 Telling why the statues droop  
 Underneath the churchyard trees,

And how ye must lie beneath them  
Through the winters long and  
deep.  
Till the last trump overbreathe  
them.  
And ye smile out of your sleep.  
Oh, ye lifted up your head, and it  
seemed as if they said  
A tale of fairy slips  
With a swan-wing for a sail;  
Oh, ye kissed their loving lips  
For the merry, merry tale—  
So carelessly ye thought upon the  
dead.

## II.

Soon ye read in solemn stories  
Of the men of long ago,  
Of the pale bewildering glories  
Shining farther than we know;  
Of the heroes with the laurel,  
Of the poets with the bay,  
Of the two world's earnest quar-  
rel  
For that beauteous Helena;  
How Achilles at the portal  
Of the tent heard footsteps nigh,  
And his strong heart, half-immor-  
tal,  
Met the *keitaï* with a cry;  
How Ulysses left the sunlight  
For the pale eidola race,  
Blank and passive through the dun  
light,  
Staring blindly in his face;  
How that true wife said to Pætus,  
With calm smile and wounded  
heart,  
"Sweet, it hurts not!" How Ad-  
metus  
Saw his blessed one depart;  
How King Arthur proved his mis-  
sion,  
And Sir Roland wound his horn,  
And at Sangreal's moony vision  
Swords did bristle round like  
corn.  
Oh, ye lifted up your head, and it  
seemed, the while ye read,  
That this death then must be  
found  
A Valhalla for the crowned,  
The heroic who prevail:  
None be sure can enter in  
Far below a paladin  
Of a noble, noble *zōia*—  
So awfully ye thought upon the  
dead!

## III.

Ay, but soon ye woke up shrieking,  
As a child that wakes at night  
From a dream of sisters speaking  
In a garden's summer-light, —  
That wakes starting up and bound-  
ing,  
In a lonely, lonely bed,  
With a wall of darkness round him,  
Stifling black about his head!  
And the full sense of your mortal  
Rushed upon you deep and loud,  
And ye heard the thunder hurtle  
From the silence of the cloud.  
Funeral-torches at your gateway  
Threw a dreadful light within.  
All things changed: you rose up  
straightway,  
And saluted Death and Sin.  
Since, your outward man has ral-  
lied,  
And your eye and voice grown  
bold;  
Yet the Sphinx of Life stands pallid,  
With her saddest secret told.  
Happy places have grown holy:  
If ye went where once ye went,  
Only tears would fall down slowly,  
As at solemn sacrament.  
Merry books, once read for pastime,  
If ye dared to read again,  
Only memories of the last time  
Would swim darkly up the brain.  
Household names, which used to  
flutter  
Through your laughter unawares,  
God's divinest ye could utter  
With less trembling in your  
prayers.  
Ye have dropt adown your head, and  
it seems as if ye tread  
On your own hearts in the  
path  
Ye are called to in His wrath,  
And your prayers go up in  
wail  
— "Dost Thou see, then, all  
our loss,  
O Thou agonized on cross?  
Art thou reading all its tale?"  
So mournfully ye think upon the  
dead!

## IV.

Pray, pray, thou who also weapest,  
And the drops will slacken so.  
Weep, weep, and the watch thou  
keepest  
With a quicker count will go.

Think: the shadow on the dial  
 For the nature most undone  
 Marks the passing of the trial,  
 Proves the presence of the sun.  
 Look, look up, in starry passion,  
 To the throne above the spheres:  
 Learn: the spirit's gravitation  
 Still must differ from the tear's.  
 Hope: with all the strength thou  
 usest  
 In embracing thy despair.  
 Love: the earthly love thou lovest  
 Shall return to thee more fair.  
 Work: make clear the forest-tangles  
 Of the wildest stranger-land.  
 Trust: the blessed deathly angels  
 Whisper, "Sabbath hours at  
 hand!"  
 By the heart's wound when most  
 gory,  
 By the longest agony,  
 Smile! — Behold in sudden glory  
 The TRANSFIGURED smiles on *thee*!  
 And ye lifted up your head, and it  
 seemed as if He said,  
 "My beloved, is it so?  
 Have ye tasted of my woe?  
 Of my heaven ye shall not  
 fail!"  
 He stands brightly where the  
 shade is,  
 With the keys of Death and  
 Hades,  
 And there, ends the mournful  
 tale —  
 So hopefully ye think upon the dead!

## NIGHT AND THE MERRY MAN.

### NIGHT.

'NEATH my moon, what doest thou,  
 With a somewhat paler brow  
 Than she giveth to the ocean?  
 He, without a pulse or motion,  
 Muttering low before her stands,  
 Lifting his invoking hands  
 Like a seer before a sprite,  
 To catch her oracles of light:  
 But thy soul out-trembles now  
 Many pulses on thy brow.

Where be all thy laughters clear,  
 Others laughed alone to hear?  
 Where thy quaint jests, said for  
 fame?  
 Where thy dances, mixed with game?  
 Where thy festive companies,  
 Moonèd o'er with ladies' eyes  
 All more bright for thee, I trow?  
 'Neath my moon, what doest thou?

### THE MERRY MAN.

I AM digging my warm heart  
 Till I find its coldest part;  
 I am digging wide and low,  
 Farther than a spade will go,  
 Till that, when the pit is deep  
 And large enough, I there may heap  
 All my present pain and past  
 Joy, dead things that look aghast  
 By the daylight: now 'tis done.  
 Throw them in, by one and one!  
 I must laugh, at rising sun.

Memories, — of fancy's golden  
 Treasures which my hands have  
 holden  
 Till the chillness made them ache;  
 Of childhood's hopes, that used to  
 wake  
 If birds were in a singing strain,  
 And, for less cause, sleep again;  
 Of the moss seat in the wood  
 Where I trysted solitude;  
 Of the hilltop where the wind  
 Used to follow me behind,  
 Then in sudden rush to blind  
 Both my glad eyes with my hair,  
 Taken gladly in the snare;  
 Of the climbing up the rocks,  
 Of the playing 'neath the oaks  
 Which retain beneath them now  
 Only shadow of the bough;  
 Of the lying on the grass  
 While the clouds did overpass,  
 Only they, so lightly driven,  
 Seeming betwixt me and heaven;  
 Of the little prayers serene,  
 Murmuring of earth and sin;  
 Of large-leaved philosophy  
 Leaning from my childish knee;  
 Of poetic book sublime,  
 Soul-kissed for the first dear time,  
 Greek or English, ere I knew  
 Life was not a poem too:  
 Throw them in, by one and one!  
 I must laugh, at rising sun.

— Of the glorious ambitions  
 Yet unquenched by their fruitions;  
 Of the reading out the nights;  
 Of the straining at mad heights;  
 Of achievements, less descried  
 By a dear few than magnified;  
 Of praises from the many earned  
 When praise from love was undis-  
 cerned;

Of the sweet reflecting gladness  
 Softened by itself to sadness:  
 Throw them in, by one and one!  
 I must laugh, at rising sun.

What are these? more, more than  
 these!

Throw in dearer memories! —  
 Of voices whereof but to speak  
 Makes mine own all sunk and weak;  
 Of smiles the thought of which is  
 sweeping

All my soul to floods of weeping;  
 Of looks whose absence fain would  
 weigh

My looks to the ground for aye;  
 Of clasping hands — ah me, I wring  
 Mine, and in a tremble fling  
 Downward, downward, all this pain-  
 ing!

Partings with the sting remaining,  
 Meetings with a deeper throe  
 Since the joy is ruined so,  
 Changes with a fiery burning,  
 (Shadows upon all the turning),  
 Thoughts of . . . with a storm they  
 came,

*Them* I have not breath to name:  
 Downward, downward, be they cast  
 In the pit! and now at last  
 My work beneath the moon is done,  
 And I shall laugh, at rising sun.

But let me pause or ere I cover  
 All my treasures darkly over:  
 I will speak not in thine ears,  
 Only tell my beaded tears  
 Silently, most silently.  
 When the last is calmly told,  
 Let that same moist rosary  
 With the rest sepulchred be,  
 Finished now! The darksome mould  
 Sealeth up the darksome pit.  
 I will lay no stone on it:  
 Grasses I will sow instead,  
 Fit for Queen Titania's tread;  
 Flowers, encolored with the sun,  
 And *ai ai* written upon none;  
 Thus, whenever saileth by  
 The Lady World of dainty eye,

Not a grief shall here remain,  
 Silken shoon to damp or stain;  
 And while she lisps, "I have not  
 seen  
 Any place more smooth and clean,"  
 Here she cometh! Ha, ha! who  
 Laughs as loud as I can do?

## EARTH AND HER PRAISERS.

### I.

THE Earth is old;  
 Six thousand winters make her heart  
 a-cold:  
 The sceptre slanteth from her palsied  
 hold.  
 She saith, "'las me! God's word  
 that I was 'good'  
 Is taken back to heaven,  
 From whence, when any sound comes,  
 I am riven  
 By some sharp bolt; and now no angel  
 would  
 Descend with sweet dew-silence on  
 my mountains,  
 To glorify the lovely river fountains  
 That gush along their side:  
 I see, O weary change! I see instead  
 This human wrath and pride,  
 These thrones and tombs, judicial  
 wrong and blood,  
 And bitter words are poured upon  
 mine head —  
 'O Earth! thou art a stage for tricks  
 unholy,  
 A church for most remorseful melan-  
 choly;  
 Thou art so spoilt we should forget  
 we had  
 An Eden in thee, wert thou not so  
 sad!'   
 Sweet children, I am old! ye, every  
 one,  
 Do keep me from a portion of my  
 sun:  
 Give praise in change for  
 brightness!  
 That I may shake my hills in infinite-  
 ness

Of breezy laughter, as in youthful  
mirth,  
To hear Earth's sons and daughters  
praising Earth."

## ii.

Whereupon a child began,  
With spirit running up to man  
As by angel's shining ladder,  
(May he find no cloud above!)  
Seeming he had ne'er been sadder  
All his days than now,  
Sitting in the chestnut-grove,  
With that joyous overflow  
Of smiling from his mouth o'er brow  
And cheek and chin, as if the breeze,  
Leaning tricky from the trees  
To part his golden hairs, had blown  
Into an hundred smiles that one.

## iii.

"O rare, rare Earth!" he saith,  
"I will praise thee presently;  
Not to-day, I have no breath:  
I have hunted squirrels three —  
Two ran down in the furzy hollow;  
Where I could not see nor follow;  
One sits at the top of the filbert-tree,  
With a yellow nut and a mock at me:  
Presently it shall be done!  
When I see which way these two have  
run,  
When the mocking one at the filbert-  
top  
Shall leap adown, and beside me stop,  
Then, rare Earth, rare Earth,  
Will I pause, having known thy worth,  
To say all good of thee!"

## iv.

Next a lover, — with a dream  
'Neath his waking eyelids hidden,  
And a frequent sigh unbidden,  
And an idlesse all the day  
Beside a wandering stream,  
And a silence that is made  
Of a word he dares not say, —  
Shakes slow his pensive head:  
"Earth, Earth!" saith he,  
"If spirits, like thy roses, grew  
On one stalk, and winds austere  
Could but only blow them near,  
To share each other's dew;  
If, when summer rains agree  
To beautify thy hills, I knew  
Looking off them I might see  
Some one very beauteous too, —

Then Earth," saith he,  
"I would praise . . . nay, nay — not  
thee!"

## v.

Will the pedant name her next?  
Crabbed with a crabbed text  
Sits he in his study nook,  
With his elbow on a book,  
And with stately crossèd knees,  
And a wrinkle deeply thrid  
Through his lowering brow,  
Caused by making proofs enow  
That Plato in "Parmenides"  
Meant the same Spinoza did;  
Or that an hundred of the groping  
Like himself had made one Homer,  
*Homeros* being a misnomer.  
What hath *he* to do with praise  
Of Earth or ought? Whene'er the  
sloping  
Sunbeams through his windows daze  
His eyes off from the learned phrase,  
Straightway he draws close the cur-  
tain.

May abstraction keep him dumb!  
Were his lips to ope, 'tis certain  
"Derivatum est" would come.

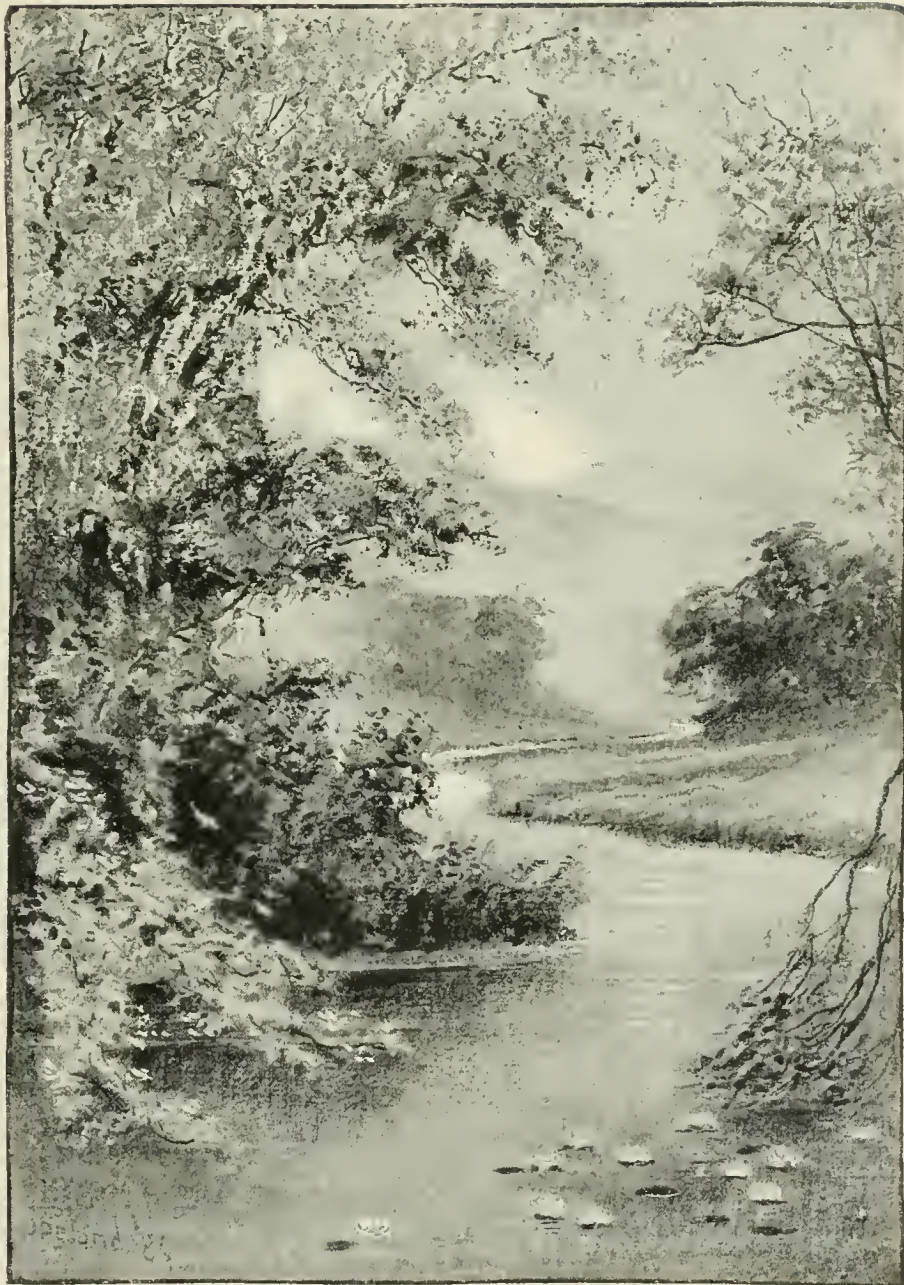
## vi.

Then a mourner moveth pale  
In a silence full of wail,  
Raising not his sunken head  
Because he wandered last that way  
With that one beneath the clay:  
Weeping not, because that one,  
The only one who would have said,  
"Cease to weep, beloved!" has gone  
Whence returneth comfort none.  
The silence breaketh suddenly, —  
"Earth, I praise thee!" crieth he,  
"Thou hast a grave for also *me*."

## vii.

Ha, a poet! know him by  
The eestasy-dilated eye,  
Not uncharged with tears that ran  
Upward from his heart of man;  
By the cheek, from hour to hour,  
Kindled bright, or sunken wan  
With a sense of lonely power;  
By the brow uplifted higher  
Than others, for more low declining;  
By the lip which words of fire  
Overboiling have burned white,  
While they gave the nations light:  
Ay, in every time and place,  
Ye may know the poet's face  
By the shade or shining.





“The leanings  
Of the close trees o'er the brim  
Of a sunshine-haunted stream.” — Page 329.

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## VIII.

'Neath a golden cloud he stands,  
 Spreading his impassioned hands.  
 "O God's Earth!" he saith, "the sign  
 From the Father-soul to mine  
 Of all beauteous mysteries,  
 Of all perfect images  
 Which, divine in his divine,  
 In my human only are  
 Very excellent and fair!  
 Think not, Earth, that I would raise  
 Weary forehead in thy praise,  
 (Weary, that I cannot go  
 Farther from thy region low,  
 If were struck no richer meanings  
 From thee than thyself. The leanings  
 Of the close trees o'er the brim  
 Of a sunshine-haunted stream  
 Have a sound beneath their leaves,  
 Not of wind, not of wind,  
 Which the poet's voice achieves:  
 The faint mountains, heaped behind,  
 Have a falling on their tops,  
 Not of dew, not of dew,  
 Which the poet's fancy drops:  
 Viewless things his eyes can view,  
 Driftings of his dream do light  
 All the skies by day and night.  
 And the seas that deepest roll  
 Carry murmurs of his soul.  
 Earth, I praise thee! praise thou *me*!  
 God perfecteth his creation  
 With this recipient poet-passion,  
 And makes the beautiful to be.  
 I praise thee, O beloved sign,  
 From the God-soul unto mine!  
 Praise me, that I cast on thee  
 The cunning sweet interpretation,  
 The help and glory and dilation  
 Of mine immortality!"

## IX.

There was silence. None did dare  
 To use again the spoken air  
 Of that far-charming voice, until  
 A Christian resting on the hill,  
 With a thoughtful smile subdued  
 (Seeming learnt in solitude)  
 Which a weeper might have viewed  
 Without new tears, did softly say,  
 And looked up unto heaven alway  
 While he praised the Earth, —  
 "O Earth,  
 I count the praises thou art worth,  
 By thy waves that move aloud,  
 By thy hills against the cloud,  
 By thy valleys warm and green,  
 By the copses' elms between,

By their birds, which, like a sprite  
 Scattered by a strong delight  
 Into fragments musical,  
 Stir and sing in every bush:  
 By thy silver founts that fall,  
 As if to entice the stars at night  
 To thine heart; by grass and rush,  
 And little weeds the children pull,  
 Mistook for flowers!  
 — Oh, beautiful  
 Art thou, Earth, albeit worse  
 Than in heaven is called good!  
 Good to us, that we may know  
 Meekly from thy good to go:  
 While the holy, crying blood  
 Puts its music kind and low  
 'Twixt such ears as are not dull,  
 And thine ancient curse!

## X.

"Praised be the mosses soft  
 In thy forest pathways oft,  
 And the thorns, which make us  
 think  
 Of the thornless river-brink  
 Where the ransomed tread;  
 Praised be thy sunny gleams,  
 And the storm, that worketh dreams  
 Of calm unfinished;  
 Praised be thine active days,  
 And thy night-time's solemn need,  
 When in God's dear book we read  
*No night shall be therein;*  
 Praised be thy dwellings warm  
 By household fagot's cheerful blaze,  
 Where, to hear of pardoned sin,  
 Pauseth oft the merry din,  
 Save the babe's upon the arm  
 Who croweth to the crackling wood:  
 Yea, and, better understood,  
 Praised be thy dwellings cold,  
 Hid beneath the churchyard mould,  
 Where the bodies of the saints,  
 Separate from earthly taints,  
 Lie asleep, in blessing bound,  
 Waiting for the trumpet's sound  
 To free them into blessing — none  
 Weeping more beneath the sun,  
 Though dangerous words of human  
 love  
 Be graven very near, above.

## XI.

"Earth, we Christians praise thee  
 thus,  
 Even for the change that comes  
 With a grief from thee to us;  
 For thy cradles and thy tombs,

For the pleasant corn and wine  
And summer-heat, and also for  
The frost upon the sycamore  
And hail upon the vine!"

## THE VIRGIN MARY TO THE CHILD JESUS.

"But see the Virgin blest  
Hath laid her babe to rest."  
MILTON'S *Hymn on the Nativity*.

### I.

SLEEP, sleep, mine Holy One!  
My flesh, my Lord! — what name? I  
do not know  
A name that seemeth not too high or  
low,  
Too far from me or heaven:  
My Jesus, *that* is best! that word be-  
ing given  
By the majestic angel whose com-  
mand  
Was softly as a man's beseeching,  
said,  
When I and all the earth appeared to  
stand  
In the great overflow  
Of light celestial from his wings and  
head.  
Sleep, sleep, my saving One!

### II.

And art thou come for saving, baby-  
browed  
And speechless Being — art thou  
come for saving?  
The palm that grows beside our door  
is bowed  
By treadings of the low wind from  
the south,  
A restless shadow through the cham-  
ber waving:  
Upon its bough a bird sings in the  
sun;  
But thou, with that close slumber on  
thy mouth,  
Dost seem of wind and sun already  
weary.  
Art come for saving, O my weary  
One?

### III.

Perehance this sleep, that shutteth out  
the dreary  
Earth sounds and motions, opens on  
thy soul  
High dreams on fire with God;  
High songs that make the pathways  
where they roll  
More bright than stars do theirs; and  
visions new  
Of thine eternal Nature's old abode.  
Suffer this mother's kiss,  
Best thing that earthly is,  
To glide the music and the glory  
through,  
Nor narrow in thy dream the broad  
upliftings  
Of any seraph wing.  
Thus noiseless, thus. Sleep, sleep,  
my dreaming One!

### IV.

The slumber of his lips meseems to  
run  
Through *my* lips to mine heart, to all  
its shiftings  
Of sensual life, bringing contrarions-  
ness  
In a great calm. I feel I could lie  
down  
As Moses did, and die,<sup>1</sup> — and then  
live most.  
I am 'ware of you, heavenly Pres-  
ences,  
That stand with your peculiar light  
unlost,  
Each forehead with a high thought  
for a crown,  
Unsummed i' the sunshine! I am  
'ware. Ye throw  
No shade against the wall! How  
motionless  
Ye round me with your living statu-  
ary,  
While through your whiteness, in  
and outwardly,  
Continual thoughts of God appear to  
go,  
Like light's soul in itself. I bear, I  
bear  
To look upon the dropt lids of your  
eyes,  
Though their external shining testi-  
fies  
To that beatitude within which were  
Enough to blast an eagle at his sun:

<sup>1</sup> It is a Jewish tradition that Moses died  
of the kisses of God's lips.

I fall not on my sad clay face before  
ye, —  
I look on His. I know  
My spirit which dilateth with the woe  
Of His mortality,  
May well contain your glory.  
Yea, drop your lids more low.  
Ye are but fellow-worshippers with  
me!  
Sleep, sleep, my worshipped One!

## v.

We sate among the stalls at Bethle-  
hem;  
The dumb kine, from their fodder  
turning them,  
Softened their hornèd faces  
To almost human gazes  
Toward the newly Born:  
The simple shepherds from the star-  
lit brooks  
Brought visionary looks,  
As yet in their astonished hearing rung  
The strange sweet angel-tongue:  
The magi of the East, in sandals  
worn,  
Knelt reverent, sweeping round,  
With long pale beards, their gifts  
upon the ground,  
The incense, myrrh, and gold  
These baby hands were impotent to  
hold:  
So let all earthlies and celestials wait  
Upon thy royal state.  
Sleep, sleep, my kingly One!

## vi.

I am not proud — meek angels, ye in-  
vest  
New meeknesses to hear such utter-  
ance rest  
On mortal lips, — “I am not proud”  
— *not proud!*  
Albeit in my flesh God sent his Son,  
Albeit over him my head is bowed  
As others bow before him, still mine  
heart  
Bows lower than their knees. O cen-  
turies  
That roll in vision your futurities  
My future grave athwart,  
Whose murmurs seem to reach me  
while I keep  
Watch o’er this sleep,  
Say of me as the Heavenly said,  
“Thou art

The blessedest of women!” — bless-  
edest,  
Not holiest, not noblest, no high  
name  
Whose height misplaced may pierce  
me like a shame  
When I sit meek in heaven!  
For me, for me,  
God knows that I am feeble like the  
rest!  
I often wandered forth more child  
than maiden,  
Among the midnight hills of Galilee  
Whose summits looked heaven-  
laden,  
Listening to silence as it seemed to be  
God’s voice, so soft yet strong, so  
fain to press  
Upon my heart as heaven did on the  
height,  
And waken up its shadows by a  
light,  
And show its vileness by a holiness.  
Then I knelt down most silent like  
the night,  
Too self-renounced for fears,  
Raising my small face to the bound-  
less blue  
Whose stars did mix and tremble in  
my tears:  
God heard *them* falling after, with his  
dew.

## vii.

So, seeing my corruption, can I see  
This Incorruptible now born of me,  
This fair new Innocence no sun did  
chance  
To shine on (for even Adam was no  
child),  
Created from my nature all defiled,  
This mystery, from out mine igno-  
rance, —  
Nor feel the blindness, stain, corrup-  
tion, more  
Than others do, or *I* did heretofore?  
Can hands wherein such burden pure  
has been  
Not open with the cry, “Unclean,  
unclean,”  
More oft than any else beneath the  
skies?  
Ah King, ah Christ, ah son!  
The kine, the shepherds, the abasèd  
wise  
Must all less lowly wait  
Than I, upon thy state.  
Sleep, sleep, my kingly One.

## VIII.

Art thou a King, then? Come, his  
universe,

Come, crown me him a King.  
Pluck rays from all such stars as  
never fling

Their light where fell a curse,  
And make a crowning for this kingly  
brow.

What is my word? Each empyreal  
star

Sits in a sphere afar  
In shining ambushade:  
The child-brow, crowned by none,  
Keeps its unchildlike shade.  
Sleep, sleep, my crownless One.

## IX.

Unchildlike shade! No other babe  
doth wear

An aspect very sorrowful, as thou.  
No small babe-smiles my watching  
heart has seen

To float like speech the speechless  
lips between,

No dovelike cooing in the golden air,  
No quick, short joys of leaping baby-  
hood:

Alas! our earthly good  
In heaven thought evil, seems too  
good for thee.  
Yet sleep, my weary One.

## X.

And then the drear, sharp tongue of  
prophecy,

With the dread sense of things which  
shall be done,

Doth smite me inly, like a sword: a  
sword?

That "smites the Shepherd." Then,  
I think aloud

The words "despised," "rejected,"  
every word

Recoiling into darkness as I view  
The DARLING on my knee.

Bright angels, move not, lest ye stir  
the cloud

Betwixt my soul and his futurity.  
I must not die, with mother's work to  
do,

And could not live — and see.

## XI.

It is enough to bear  
This image still and fair;  
This holier in sleep  
Than a saint at prayer;

This aspect of a child  
Who never sinned or smiled;  
This presenee in an infant's face:  
This sadness most like love;  
This love than love more deep;  
This weakness like omnipotence  
It is so strong to move.  
Awful is this watching place,  
Awful what I see from hence, —  
A king without regalia,  
A God without the thunder,  
A child without the heart for play;  
Ay, a Creator, rent asunder  
From his first glory, and cast away  
On his own world, for me alone  
To hold in hands created, crying,  
"SON!"

## XII.

That tear fell not on thee,  
Beloved, yet thou stirrest in thy  
slumber!

Thou, stirring not for glad sounds out  
of number,

Which through the vibratory palm-  
trees run

From summer wind and bird,  
So quickly hast thou heard  
A tear fall silently?

Wak'st thou, O loving one?

## AN ISLAND.

"All goeth but Goddis will." — OLD PORT.

## I.

My dream is of an island place,  
Which distant seas keep lonely, —  
A little island on whose face  
The stars are watchers only:  
Those bright, still stars! they need  
not seem  
Brighter or stiller in my dream.

## II.

An island full of hills and dells,  
All rumpled and uneven  
With green recesses, sudden swells,  
And odorous valleys driven  
So deep and straight, that always there  
The wind is cradled to soft air.

## III.

Hills running up to heaven for light  
Through woods that half-way ran,  
As if the wild earth mimicked right  
The wilder heart of man:  
Only it shall be greener far,  
And gladder, than hearts ever are.

## IV.

More like, perhaps, that mountain  
piece  
Of Dante's paradise,  
Disrupt to an hundred hills like these,  
In falling from the skies;  
Bringing within it all the roots  
Of heavenly trees and flowers and  
fruits:

## V.

For, saving where the gray rocks strike  
Their javelins up the azure,  
Or where deep fissures, miser-like,  
Hoard up some fountain treasure,  
(And e'en in them, stoop down and  
hear  
Leaf sounds with water in your ear),

## VI.

The place is all awave with trees, —  
Limes, myrtles purple-beaded,  
Acacias having drunk the lees  
Of the night-dew, faint-headed,  
And wan gray olive-woods, which  
seem  
The fittest foliage for a dream.

## VII.

Trees, trees, on all sides! They com-  
bine  
Their plummy shades to throw,  
Through whose clear fruit and blos-  
som fine  
Whene'er the sun may go,  
The ground beneath he deeply stains,  
As passing through cathedral panes.

## VIII.

But little needs this earth of ours  
That shining from above her,  
When many pleiades of flowers  
(Not one lost) star her over;  
The rays of their unnumbered hues  
Being all refracted by the dews.

## IX.

Wide-petalled plants that boldly drink  
The Amreeta of the sky,  
Shut bells that dull with rapture sink,  
And lolling buds, half shy:  
I cannot count them, but between  
Is room for grass and mosses green,

## X.

And brooks, that glass in different  
strengths  
All colors in disorder,  
Or, gathering up their silver lengths  
Beside their winding border,  
Sleep, haunted through the slumber  
hidden.  
By lilies white as dreams in Eden.

## XI.

Nor think each archèd tree with each  
Too closely interlaces  
To admit of vistas out of reach,  
And broad moon-lighted places,  
Upon whose sward the antlered deer  
May view their double image clear.

## XII.

For all this island's creature-full  
(Kept happy not by halves),  
Mild cows, that at the vine-wreaths  
pull,  
Then low back at their calves  
With tender lowings, to approve  
The warm mouths milking them for  
love.

## XIII.

Free, gamesome horses, antelopes,  
And harmless leaping leopards,  
And buffaloes upon the slopes,  
And sheep unrulèd by shepherds;  
Hares, lizards, hedgehogs, badgers,  
mice,  
Snakes, squirrels, frogs, and butter-  
flies.

## XIV.

And birds that live there in a crowd,  
Horned owls, rapt nightingales,  
Larks bold with heaven, and peacocks  
proud,  
Self-sphered in those grand tails;  
All creatures glad and safe, I deem:  
No guns nor springes in my dream!

## XV.

The island's edges are a-wing  
 With trees that overbranch  
 The sea with song-birds welcoming  
 The curlews to green change;  
 And doves from half-closed lids espy  
 The red and purple fish go by.

## XVI.

One dove is answering in trust  
 The water every minute,  
 Thinking so soft a murmur must  
 Have her mate's cooing in it:  
 So softly doth earth's beauty round  
 Infuse itself in ocean's sound.

## XVII.

My sanguine soul bounds forwarder  
 To meet the bounding waves;  
 Beside them straightway I repair,  
 To live within the caves:  
 And near me two or three may dwell,  
 Whom dreams fantastic please as well.

## XVIII.

Long winding caverns, glittering far  
 Into a crystal distance!  
 Through clefts of which, shall many a  
 star  
 Shine clear without resistance!  
 And carry down its rays the smell  
 Of flowers above invisible.

## XIX.

I said that two or three might choose  
 Their dwelling near mine own, —  
 Those who would change man's voice  
 and use,  
 For Nature's way and tone:  
 Man's veering heart and careless eyes,  
 For Nature's steadfast sympathies.

## XX.

Ourselves, to meet her faithfulness,  
 Shall play a faithful part:  
 Her beautiful shall ne'er address  
 The monstrous at our heart:  
 Her musical shall ever touch  
 Something within us also such.

## XXI.

Yet shall she not our mistress live,  
 As doth the moon of ocean,  
 Though gently as the moon she give  
 Our thoughts a light and motion:  
 More like a harp of many lays,  
 Moving its master while he plays.

## XXII.

No sod in all that island doth  
 Yawn open for the dead;  
 No wind hath borne a traitor's oath;  
 No earth, a mourner's tread:  
 We cannot say by stream or shade,  
 "I suffered *here*, was *here* betrayed."

## XXIII.

Our only "farewell" we shall laugh  
 To shifting cloud or hour,  
 And use our only epitaph  
 To some bud turned a flower:  
 Our only tears shall serve to prove  
 Excess in pleasure or in love.

## XXIV.

Our fancies shall their plumage catch  
 From fairest island-birds,  
 Whose eggs let young ones out at  
 hatch,  
 Born singing! then our words  
 Unconsciously shall take the dyes  
 Of those prodigious fantasies.

## XXV.

Yea, soon, no consonant unsmooth  
 Our smile-tuned lips shall reach;  
 Sounds sweet as Hellas spake in  
 youth  
 Shall glide into our speech:  
 (What music, certes, can you find  
 As soft as voices which are kind?)

## XXVI.

And often, by the joy without  
 And in us overcome,  
 We, through our musing, shall let  
 float  
 Such poems — sitting dumb —  
 As Pindar might have writ if he  
 Had tended sheep in Aready;

## XXVII.

Or Æschylus — the pleasant fields  
 He died in, longer knowing;  
 Or Homer, had men's sins and shields  
 Been lost in Meles flowing;  
 Or poet Plato, had the undim  
 Unsetting Godlight broke on him.

## XXVIII.

Choose me the cave most worthy  
 choice,  
 To make a place for prayer,  
 And I will choose a praying voice  
 To pour our spirits there:



How silverly the echoes run!  
*Thy will be done, — thy will be done.*

## XXIX.

Gently yet strangely uttered words!  
 They lift me from my dream;  
 The island fadeth with its swards  
 That did no more than seem:  
 The streams are dry, no sun could  
 find —  
 The fruits are fallen without wind.

## XXX.

So oft the doing of God's will  
 Our foolish wills undoeth!  
 And yet what idle dream breaks ill,  
 Which morning-light subdueth?  
 And who would murmur and mis-  
 doubt,  
 When God's great sunrise finds him  
 out?

## THE SOUL'S TRAVEL- LING.

Ἡδὴ νοερούς  
 Πηρασαί τάρσους.

SYNESIUS.

## I.

I DWELL amid the city ever.  
 The great humanity which beats  
 Its life along the stony streets,  
 Like a strong and unsunned river  
 In a self-made course,  
 I sit and harken while it rolls.  
 Very sad and very hoarse  
 Certes is the flow of souls;  
 Infinitest tendencies:  
 By the finite prest and pent,  
 In the finite, turbulent:  
 How we tremble in surprise  
 When sometimes, with an awful  
 sound,  
 God's great plummet strikes the  
 ground!

## II.

The champ of the steeds on the silver  
 bit  
 As they whirl the rich man's carriage  
 by;

The beggar's whine as he looks at  
 it—

But it goes too fast for charity;  
 The trail on the street of the poor  
 man's broom,  
 That the lady who walks to her pal-  
 ace-home,  
 On her silken skirt may catch no  
 dust;  
 The tread of the business-men who  
 must  
 Count their per-cents by the paces  
 they take;  
 The cry of the babe unheard of its  
 mother  
 Though it lie on her breast, while she  
 thinks of the other  
 Laid yesterday where it will not  
 wake;  
 The flower-girl's prayer to buy roses  
 and pinks,  
 Held out in the smoke, like stars by  
 day;  
 The gin-door's oath that hollowly  
 chinks  
 Guilt upon grief, and wrong upon  
 hate;  
 The cabman's cry to get out of the  
 way;  
 The dustman's call down the area-  
 grate;  
 The young maid's jest, and the old  
 wife's scold,  
 The haggling talk of the boys at a  
 stall,  
 The fight in the street which is backed  
 for gold,  
 The plea of the lawyers in Westmin-  
 ster Hall;  
 The drop on the stones of the blind  
 man's staff  
 As he trades in his own grief's sacred-  
 ness;  
 The brothel shriek, and the Newgate  
 laugh;  
 The hum upon 'Change, and the or-  
 gan's grinding;  
 (The grinder's face being neverthe-  
 less  
 Dry and vacant of even woe  
 While the children's hearts are leap-  
 ing so  
 At the merry music's winding);  
 The black-plumed funeral's creeping  
 train  
 Long and slow (and yet they will  
 go  
 As fast as life, though it hurry and  
 strain!)

Creeping the populous houses through,  
 And nodding their plumes at either  
 side, —  
 At many a house where an infant,  
 new  
 To the sunshiny world, has just strug-  
 gled and cried, —  
 At many a house where sitteth a  
 bride  
 Trying to-morrow's coronals  
 With a scarlet blush to-day:  
 Slowly creep the funerals,  
 As none should hear the noise, and  
 say,  
 "The living, the living, must go away  
 To multiply the dead."  
 Hark! an upward shout is sent:  
 In grave, strong joy from tower to  
 steeple  
 The bells ring out,  
 The trumpets sound, the people shout,  
 The young queen goes to her parlia-  
 ment;  
 She turneth round her large blue  
 eyes.  
 More bright with childish memories  
 Than royal hope, upon the people;  
 On either side she bows her head  
 Lowly, with a queenly grace,  
 And smile most trusting-innocent,  
 As if she smiled upon her mother;  
 The thousands press before each other  
 To bless her to her face;  
 And booms the deep majestic voice  
 Through trump and drum. "May  
 the queen rejoice  
 In the people's liberties : "

## III.

I dwell amid the city,  
 And hear the flow of souls in act  
 and speech,  
 For pomp or trade, for merrymake or  
 folly:  
 I hear the confluence and sum of  
 each,  
 And that is melancholy!  
 Thy voice is a complaint, O crownèd  
 city,  
 The blue sky covering thee like God's  
 great pity.

## IV.

O blue sky! it mindeth me  
 Of places where I used to see  
 Its vast unbroken circle thrown  
 From the far pale-peaked hill  
 Out to the last verge of ocean,

As by God's arm it were done  
 Then for the first time, with the  
 emotion  
 Of that first impulse on it still.  
 Oh we spirits fly at will  
 Faster than the wingèd steed  
 Whereof in old book we read,  
 With the sunlight foaming back  
 From his flanks to a misty wrack,  
 And his nostril reddening proud  
 As he breasteth the steep thunder-  
 cloud, —  
 Smoother than Sabrina's chair,  
 Gliding up from wave to air,  
 While she smileth debonair  
 Yet holy, coldly and yet brightly,  
 Like her own mooned waters  
 nightly,  
 Through her dripping hair.

## V.

Very fast and smooth we fly,  
 Spirits, though the flesh be by:  
 All looks feed not from the eye,  
 Nor all hearings from the ear:  
 We can hearken and espy  
 Without either, we can journey  
 Bold and gay as knight to tourney;  
 And, though we wear no visor  
 down  
 To dark our countenance, the foe  
 Shall never chafe us as we go.

## VI.

I am gone from peopled town!  
 It passeth its street-thunder round  
 My body which yet hears no sound;  
 For now another sound, another  
 Vision, my soul's senses have —  
 O'er a hundred valleys deep  
 Where the hills' green shadows  
 sleep,  
 Scarce known because the valley-  
 trees  
 Cross those upland images,  
 O'er a hundred hills each other,  
 Watching to the western wave,  
 I have travelled, — I have found  
 The silent, lone, remembered  
 ground.

## VII.

I have found a grassy niche  
 Hollowed in a seaside-hill,  
 As if the ocean-grandeur, which  
 Is aspectable from the place,  
 Had struck the hill as with a mace,  
 Sudden and cleaving. You might  
 fill

That little nook with the little cloud  
Which sometimes lieth by the moon  
To beautify a night of June. —  
A cavelike nook, which, opening all  
To the wide sea, is disallowed  
From its own earth's sweet pas-  
toral;  
Cavelike, but roofless overhead,  
And made of verdant banks instead  
Of any rocks, with flowerets spread  
Instead of spar and stalactite,  
Cowslips and daisies gold and  
white:  
Such pretty flowers on such green  
sward,  
You think the sea they look toward  
Doth serve them for another sky,  
As warm and blue as that on high.

## VIII.

And in this hollow is a seat,  
And when you shall have crept to  
it,  
Slipping down the banks too steep  
To be o'erbrowsèd by the sheep,  
Do not think — though at your feet  
The cliff's disrupt — you shall be-  
hold  
The line where earth and ocean  
meet:  
You sit too much above to view  
The solemn confluence of the two:  
You can hear them as they greet,  
You can hear that evermore  
Distance-softened noise more old  
Than Nereid's singing, the tide  
spent  
Joining soft issues with the shore  
In harmony of discontent;  
And when you hearken to the grave  
Lamenting of the underwave,  
You must believe in earth's com-  
munion,  
Albeit you witness not the union.

## IX.

Except that sound, the place is full  
Of silences, which, when you eull  
By any word, it thrills you so,  
That presently you let them grow  
To meditation's fullest length  
Across your soul, with a soul's  
strength:  
And, as they touch your soul, they  
borrow  
Both of its grandeur and its sorrow,  
That deathly odor which the clay  
Leaves on its deathlessness alway.

## X.

Alway! alway? must this be?  
Rapid Soul from city gone,  
Dost thou carry inwardly  
What doth make the city's moan?  
Must this deep sigh of thine own  
Haunt thee with humanity?  
Green visioned banks that are too  
steep  
To be o'erbrowsèd by the sheep,  
May all sad thoughts adown you  
creep  
Without a shepherd? Mighty sea,  
Can we dwarf thy magnitude  
And fit it to our straitest mood?  
O fair, fair Nature, are we thus  
Impotent and querulous  
Among thy workings glorious,  
Wealth and sanctities, that still  
Leave us vacant and defiled,  
And wailing like a soft-kissed child,  
Kissed soft against his will?

## XI.

God, God!  
With a child's voice I cry,  
Weak, sad, confidingly —  
God, God!  
Thou knowest, eyelids raised not  
always up  
Unto thy love (as none of ours are)  
droop  
As ours o'er many a tear;  
Thou knowest, though thy universe is  
broad,  
Two little tears suffice to cover all:  
Thou knowest, thou who art so prodigal  
Of beauty, we are oft but stricken  
deer  
Expiring in the woods, that care for  
none  
Of those delightful flowers they die  
upon.

## XII.

O blissful Mouth which breathed the  
mournful breath  
We name our souls, self-spoilt! by  
that strong passion  
Which paled thee once with sighs,  
by that strong death  
Which made thee once unbreathing,  
from the wreck  
Themselves have called around them,  
call them back, —  
Back to thee in continuous aspira-  
tion!  
For here, O Lord,

For here they travel vainly, vainly  
 pass  
 From city-pavement to untrodden  
 sward  
 Where the lark finds her deep nest in  
 the grass  
 Cold with the earth's last dew. Yea,  
 very vain  
 The greatest speed of all these souls  
 of men  
 Unless they travel upward to the  
 throne  
 Where sittest THOU the satisfying  
 ONE,  
 With help for sins and holy perfect-  
 ings  
 For all requirements; while the arch-  
 angel, raising  
 Unto thy face his full ecstatic gazing,  
 Forgets the rush and rapture of his  
 wings.

## TO BETTINE.

THE CHILD-FRIEND OF GOETHE.

"I have the second-sight, Goethe!" — *Letters  
 of a Child.*

### I.

BETTINE, friend of Goethe,  
*Hadst* thou the second-sight —  
 Upturning worship and delight  
 With such a loving duty  
 To his grand face, as women will,  
 The childhood 'neath thine eyelids  
 still?

### II.

— Before his shrine to doom thee,  
 Using the same child's smile  
 That heaven and earth, beheld ere-  
 while  
 For the first time, won from thee  
 Ere star and flower grew dim and  
 dead  
 Save at his feet, and o'er his head?

### III.

— Digging thine heart, and throw-  
 ing  
 Away its childhood's gold,  
 That so its woman-depth might hold  
 His spirit's overflowing?

(For surging souls no worlds can  
 bound,  
 Their channel in the heart have  
 found.)

### IV.

O child, to change appointed,  
 Thou hadst not second-sight!  
 What eyes the future view aright  
 Unless by tears anointed?  
 Yea, only tears themselves can show  
 The burning ones that have to flow.

### V.

O woman, deeply loving,  
 Thou hadst not second-sight!  
 The star is very high and bright,  
 And none can see it moving.  
 Love looks around, below, above,  
 Yet all his prophecy is — love.

### VI.

The bird thy childhood's playing  
 Sent onward o'er the sea,  
 Thy dove of hope, came back to thee  
 Without a leaf: art laying  
 Its wet, cold wing no sun can dry,  
 Still in thy bosom secretly?

### VII.

Our Goethe's friend, Bettine,  
 I have the second-sight!  
 The stone upon his grave is white,  
 The funeral stone between ye;  
 And in thy mirror thou hast viewed  
 Some change as hardly understood.

### VIII.

Where's childhood? where is  
 Goethe?  
 The tears are in thine eyes.  
 Nay, thou shalt yet re-organize  
 Thy maidenhood of beauty  
 In his own glory, which is smooth  
 Of wrinkles, and sublime in youth.

### IX.

The poet's arms have wound thee,  
 He breathes upon thy brow,  
 He lifts thee upward in the glow  
 Of his great genius round thee,  
 The childlike poet undefiled  
 Preserving evermore THE CHILD.

## MAN AND NATURE.

A SAD man on a summer day  
Did look upon the earth, and say, —  
“ Purple cloud the hilltop binding;  
Folded hills, the valleys wind in;  
Valleys, with fresh streams among  
you;

Streams, with bosky trees along you;  
Trees, with many birds and blossoms;  
Birds, with music-trembling bosoms;  
Blossoms, dropping dews that wreath  
you

To your fellow-flowers beneath you;  
Flowers, that constellate on earth;  
Earth, that shakest to the mirth  
Of the merry Titan ocean,  
All his shining hair in motion! —  
Why am I thus the only one  
Who can be dark beneath the sun? ”  
But, when the summer day was past,  
He looked to heaven, and smiled at  
last,  
Self-answered so. —

“ Because, O cloud,  
Pressing with thy crumpled shroud  
Heavily on mountain-top;  
Hills, that almost seem to drop,  
Stricken with a misty death,  
To the valleys underneath;  
Valleys, sighing with the torrent;  
Waters, streaked with branches hor-  
rent;

Branchless trees, that shake your head  
Wildly o'er your blossoms spread  
Where the common flowers are  
found;

Flowers, with foreheads to the  
ground;

Ground, that shrieketh while the sea  
With his iron smiteth thee, —  
I am, besides, the only one  
Who can be bright *without* the sun.”

## A SEASIDE WALK.

## I.

WE walked beside the sea,  
After a day which perished silently  
Of its own glory, like the princess  
weird,  
Who, combating the Genius, scorched  
and seared,

Uttered with burning breath, “ Ho !  
victory ! ”  
And sank adown, a heap of ashes pale:  
So runs the Arab tale.

## II.

The sky above us showed  
A universal and unmoving cloud  
On which the cliffs permitted us to  
see  
Only the outline of their majesty,  
As master-minds when gazed at by  
the crowd;  
And, shining with a gloom, the water  
gray  
Swang in its moon-taught way.

## III.

Nor moon nor stars were out;  
They did not dare to tread so soon  
about,  
Though trembling, in the footsteps of  
the sun;  
The light was neither night's nor  
day's, but one  
Which, life-like, had a beauty in its  
doubt;  
And silence's impassioned breathings  
round  
Seemed wandering into sound.

## IV.

O solemn-beating heart  
Of nature! I have knowledge that  
thou art  
Bound unto man's by cords he cannot  
sever:  
And, what time they are slackened  
by him ever,  
So to attest his own supernal part,  
Still runneth thy vibration fast and  
strong  
The slackened cord along;

## V.

For though we never spoke  
Of the gray water and the shaded  
rock,  
Dark wave and stone unconsciously  
were fused  
Into the plaintive speaking that we  
used  
Of absent friends, and memories un-  
forsook;  
And, had we seen each other's face,  
we had  
Seen haply each was sad.

## THE SEA-MEW.

AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED TO  
M. E. H.

## I.

How joyously the young sea-mew  
Lay dreaming on the waters blue  
Whereon our little bark had thrown  
A little shade, the only one;  
But shadows ever man pursue.

## II.

Familiar with the waves, and free  
As if their own white foam were he,  
His heart, upon the heart of ocean,  
Lay, learning all its mystic motion,  
And throbbing to the throbbing sea.

## III.

And such a brightness in his eye,  
As if the ocean and the sky  
Within him had lit up, and nurst  
A soul God gave him not at first,  
To comprehend their majesty.

## IV.

We were not cruel, yet did sunder  
His white wing from the blue waves  
under,  
And bound it, while his fearless eyes  
Shone up to ours in calm surprise,  
As deeming us some ocean wonder.

## V.

We bore our ocean bird unto  
A grassy place where he might view  
The flowers that courtesy to the bees,  
The waving of the tall green trees,  
The falling of the silver dew.

## VI.

But flowers of earth were pale to him  
Who had seen the rainbow fishes  
swim;  
And when earth's dew around him lay,  
He thought of ocean's winged spray,  
And his eye waxed sad and dim.

## VII.

The green trees round him only made  
A prison with their darksome shade;  
And drooped his wing, and mourned he  
For his own boundless glittering sea,  
Albeit he knew not they could fade.

## VIII.

Then one her gladsome face did bring,  
Her gentle voice's murmuring,  
In ocean's stead his heart to move,  
And teach him what was human love;  
He thought it a strange, mournful  
thing.

## IX.

He lay down in his grief to die  
(First looking to the sea-like sky  
That hath no waves), because, alas!  
Our human touch did on him pass,  
And, with our touch, our agony.

## FELICIA HEMANS.

TO L. E. L., REFERRING TO HER  
MONODY ON THE POETESS.

## I.

Thou bay-crowned living one that  
o'er the bay-crowned dead art  
bowing,  
And o'er the shadeless, moveless brow  
the vital shadow throwing,  
And o'er the sighless, songless lips the  
wail and music wedding,  
And dropping o'er the tranquil eyes  
the tears not of their shed-  
ding!—

## II.

Take music from the silent dead,  
whose meaning is completer,  
Reserve thy tears for living brows,  
where all such tears are meeter,  
And leave the violets in the grass to  
brighten where thou treadest:  
No flowers for her! no need of flow-  
ers, albeit "bring flowers,"  
thou saidest.

## III.

Yes, flowers to crown the "cup and  
lute," since both may come to  
breaking;  
Or flowers to greet the "bride"—the  
heart's own beating works its  
aching;

Or flowers, to soothe the "captive's"  
sight, from earth's free bosom  
gathered,  
Reminding of his earthly hope, then  
withering as it withered:

## IV.

But bring not near the solemn corse  
a type of human seeming;  
Lay only dust's stern verity upon the  
dust undreaming:  
And, while the calm perpetual stars  
shall look upon it solely,  
Her spherèd soul shall look on *them*  
with eyes more bright and holy.

## V.

Nor mourn, O living one, because her  
part in life was mourning:  
Would she have lost the poet's fire  
for anguish of the burning?  
The minstrel harp, for the strained  
string? the tripod, for the af-  
flated  
Woe? or the vision, for those tears in  
which it shone dilated?

## VI.

Perhaps she shuddered while the  
world's cold hand her brow was  
wreathing,  
But never wronged that mystic breath  
which breathed in all her  
breathing,  
Which drew from rocky earth and  
man abstractions high and  
moving, —  
Beauty, if not the beautiful, and love,  
if not the loving.

## VII.

Such visionings have paled in sight:  
the Saviour she descrieth,  
And little reck *who* wreathed the  
brow which on his bosom lieth:  
The whiteness of his innocence o'er  
all her garments flowing,  
There learneth she the sweet "new  
song" she will not mourn in  
knowing.

## VIII.

Be happy, crowned and living one!  
and, as thy dust decayeth,  
May thine own England say for thee  
what now for her it sayeth, —

"Albeit softly in our ears her silver  
song was ringing,  
The footfall of her parting soul is  
softer than her singing."

## L. E. L.'S LAST QUESTION.

"Do you think of me as I think of you?"  
*Written during the voyage to the Cape.*

## I.

"Do you think of me as I think of  
you,  
My friends, my friends?" 'She said it  
from the sea,  
The English minstrel in her min-  
strely,  
While, under brighter skies than erst  
she knew,  
Her heart grew dark, and groped  
there as the blind  
To reach across the waves friends  
left behind —

"Do you think of me as I think of  
you?"

## II.

It seemed not much to ask — "as *I* of  
*you*?"  
We all do ask the same: no eyelids  
cover  
Within the meekest eyes that ques-  
tion over:  
And little in the world the loving  
do  
But sit (among the rocks?) and listen  
for  
The echo of their own love ever-  
more —

"Do you think of me as I think of  
you?"

## III.

Love-learnèd she had sung of love  
and love, —  
And like a child, that, sleeping with  
dropt head  
Upon the fairy-book he lately read,  
Whatever household noises round  
him move,

Hears in his dream some elfin turbulence, —  
Even so, suggestive to her inward sense,  
All sounds of life assumed one tune of love.

## iv.

And when the glory of her dream withdrew,  
When knightly gestic and courtly pageantries  
Were broken in her visionary eyes  
By tears the solemn seas attested true,  
Forgetting that sweet lute beside her hand,  
She asked not, "Do you praise me,  
O my land?"  
But, "Think ye of me, friends, as I  
of you?"

## v.

Hers was the hand that played for many a year  
Love's silver phrase for England,  
smooth and well.  
Would God, her heart's more inward oracle  
In that lone moment might confirm her dear!  
For when her questioned friends in agony  
Made passionate response, "We think of thee,"  
Her place was in the dust, too deep to hear.

## vi.

Could she not wait to catch their answering breath?  
Was she content, content, with ocean's sound,  
Which dashed its mocking infinite around  
One thirsty for a little love? — beneath  
Those stars content, where last her song had gone, —  
They mute and cold in radiant life,  
as soon  
Their singer was to be in darksome death?<sup>1</sup>

## vii.

Bring your vain answers; cry, "We think of thee!"  
How think ye of her? — warm in long ago

<sup>1</sup> Her lyric on the polar star came home with her latest papers.

Delights? or crowned with budding bays? Not so.  
None smile, and none are crowned, where lieth she,  
With all her visions unfulfilled save one,  
Her childhood's, of the palm-trees in the sun —  
And lo! their shadow on her sepulchre!

## viii.

"Do ye think of me as I think of you?" —  
O friends, O kindred, O dear brotherhood  
Of all the world! what are we that we should  
For covenants of long affection sue?  
Why press so near each other when the touch  
Is barred by graves? Not much, and yet too much,  
Is this, "Think of me as I think of you."

## ix.

But while on mortal lips I shape anew  
A sigh to mortal issues, verily  
Above the unshaken stars that see us die  
A vocal pathos rolls; and HE who drew  
All life from dust, and for all tasted death,  
By death and life and love, appealing saith,  
"Do you think of me as I think of you?"

## CROWNED AND WEDDED.

## i.

WHEN last before her people's face her own fair face she bent,  
Within the meek projection of that shade she was content  
To erase the child-smile from her lips, which seemed as if it might  
Be still kept holy from the world to childhood still in sight —



To erase it with a solemn vow, a  
 princely vow — to rule,  
 A priestly vow — to rule by grace of  
 God the pitiful,  
 A very godlike vow — to rule in right  
 and righteousness,  
 And with the law and for the land —  
 so God the vower bless !

## II.

The minster was alight that day, but  
 not with fire, I ween;  
 And long-drawn glitterings swept  
 adown that mightly aisled scene;  
 The priests stood stoled in their pomp,  
 the sworded chiefs in theirs,  
 And so the collared knights, and so  
 the civil ministers.  
 And so the waiting lords and dames,  
 and little pages best  
 At holding trains, and legates so, from  
 countries east and west;  
 So alien princes, native peers, and  
 high-born ladies bright,  
 Along whose brows the Queen's, now  
 crowned, flashed coronets to  
 light;  
 And so the people at the gates with  
 priestly hands on high,  
 Which bring the first anointing to all  
 legal majesty;  
 And so the DEAD, who lie in rows be-  
 neath the minster floor,  
 There verily an awful state maintain-  
 ing evermore;  
 The statesman whose clean palm will  
 kiss no bribe, whate'er it be.  
 The courtier who for no fair queen  
 will rise up to his knee,  
 The court-dame who for no court-tire  
 will leave her shroud behind,  
 The laureate, who no courtlier rhyme  
 than "dust to dust" can find,  
 The kings and queens who having  
 made that vow and worn that  
 crown,  
 Descended unto lower thrones, and  
 darker, deep adown:  
*Dieu et mon droit* — what is't to them ?  
 what meaning can it have ? —  
 The King of kings, the right of death  
 — God's judgment and the  
 grave.  
 And when betwixt the quick and dead  
 the young fair queen had  
 vowed,  
 The living shouted, "May she live !  
 Victoria, live !" aloud:

And, as the loyal shouts went up, true  
 spirits prayed between,  
 "The blessings happy monarchs have  
 be thine, O crownèd queen !"

## III.

But now before her people's face she  
 bendeth hers anew,  
 And calls them, while she vows, to be  
 her witness thereunto.  
 She vowed to rule, and in that oath  
 her childhood put away:  
 She doth maintain her womanhood,  
 in vowing love to-day.  
 O lovely lady ! let her vow ! such lips  
 become such vows.  
 And fairer goeth bridal wreath than  
 crown with vernal brows.  
 O lovely lady ! let her vow ! yea, let  
 her vow to love !  
 And though she be no less a queen,  
 with purples hung above,  
 The pageant of a court behind, the  
 royal kin around,  
 And woven gold to catch her looks  
 turned maidenly to ground,  
 Yet may the bride-veil hide from her  
 a little of that state,  
 While loving hopes for retinues about  
 her sweetness wait.  
 SHE vows to love who vowed to rule  
 — (the chosen at her side)  
 Let none say, God preserve the queen !  
 but rather, Bless the bride !  
 None bow the trump, none bend the  
 knee, none violate the dream  
 Wherein no monarch but a wife she  
 to herself may seem.  
 Or if ye say, Preserve the queen ! O,  
 breathe it inward low —  
 She is a *woman*, and *beloved* ! and 'tis  
 enough but so.  
 Count it enough, thou noble prince  
 who tak'st her by the hand,  
 And claimest for thy lady-love our  
 lady of the land !  
 And since, Prince Albert, men have  
 called thy spirit high and rare,  
 And true to truth and brave for truth  
 as some at Augsburg were.  
 We charge thee by thy lofty thoughts  
 and by thy poet-mind,  
 Which not by glory and degree takes  
 measure of mankind,  
 Esteem that wedded hand less dear  
 for sceptre than for ring,  
 And hold her uncrowned womanhood  
 to be the royal thing.

## IV.

And now, upon our queen's last vow  
 what blessings shall we pray?  
 None straitened to a shallow crown  
 will suit our lips to-day:  
 Behold, they must be free as love, they  
 must be broad as free,  
 Even to the borders of heaven's light  
 and earth's humanity,  
 Long live she! — send up loyal shouts,  
 and true hearts pray between,  
 "The blessings happy PEASANTS have,  
 be thine, O crowned queen!"

## CROWNED AND BURIED.

## I.

NAPOLEON! — years ago, and that  
 great word,  
 Compact of human breath in hate and  
 dread  
 And exultation, skied us overhead, —  
 An atmosphere whose lightning was  
 the sword  
 Scathing the cedars of the world, —  
 drawn down  
 In burnings by the metal of a crown.

## II.

Napoleon! — nations, while they  
 cursed that name,  
 Shook at their own curse; and while  
 others bore  
 Its sound, as of a trumpet, on before,  
 Brass-fronted legions justified its  
 fame;  
 And dying men on trampled battle-  
 sods  
 Near their last silence uttered it for  
 God's.

## III.

Napoleon! — sages, with high fore-  
 heads drooped,  
 Did use it for a problem; children  
 small  
 Leapt up to greet it, as at manhood's  
 call;  
 Priests blessed it from their altars  
 overstooped

By meek-eyed Christs; and widows  
 with a moan  
 Spake it, when questioned why they  
 sate alone.

## IV.

That name consumed the silence of  
 the snows  
 In Alpine keeping, holy and cloud-  
 hid;  
 The mimic eagles dared what Nature's  
 did,  
 And over-rushed her mountainous re-  
 pose  
 In search of eyries: and the Egyptian  
 river  
 Mingled the same word with its grand  
 "Forever."

## V.

That name was shouted near the py-  
 ramidal  
 Nilotic tombs, whose mummied habit-  
 ants,  
 Packed to humanity's significance,  
 Motioned it back with stillness, —  
 shouts as idle  
 As hireling artists' work of myrrh and  
 spice  
 Which swathed last glories round the  
 Ptolemies.

## VI.

The world's face changed to hear it:  
 kingly men  
 Came down in hidden babes' bewil-  
 derment  
 From autocratic places, each content  
 With sprinkled ashes for anointing:  
 then  
 The people laughed, or wondered for  
 the nonee,  
 To see one throne a composite of  
 thrones.

## VII.

Napoleon! — even the torrid vasti-  
 tude  
 Of India felt in throbbings of the air  
 That name which scattered by disas-  
 trous blare  
 All Europe's bound-lines, — drawn  
 afresh in blood,  
 Napoleon! — from the Russias west to  
 Spain,  
 And Austria trembled till ye heard  
 her chain;

## viii.

And Germany was 'ware; and Italy,  
Oblivious of old fames, — her laurel-  
locked,  
High-ghosted Cæsars passing unin-  
voked, —  
Did crumble her own ruins with her  
knee,  
To serve a newer: ay! but French-  
men cast  
A future from them nobler than her  
past:

## ix.

For verily, though France augustly  
rose  
With that raised NAME, and did as-  
sume by such  
The purple of the world, none gave so  
much  
As she in purchase — to speak plain,  
in loss —  
Whose hands, toward freedom  
stretched, dropped paralyzed  
To wield a sword, or fit an under-  
sized

## x.

King's crown to a great man's head.  
And though along  
Her Paris streets did float, on fre-  
quent streams  
Of triumph, pictured or emmarbled  
dreams  
Dreamt right by genius in a world  
gone wrong,  
No dream of all so won was fair to  
see  
As the lost vision of her liberty.

## xi.

Napoleon! — 'twas a high name lifted  
high:  
It met at last God's thunder sent to  
clear  
Our compassing and covering atmos-  
phere,  
And open a clear sight beyond the  
sky  
Of supreme empire; this of earth's  
was done —  
And kings crept out again to feel the  
sun.

## xii.

The kings crept out: the peoples sate  
at home,  
And, finding the long-invoked peace

(A pall embroidered with worn im-  
ages  
Of rights divine) too scant to cover  
doom  
Such as they suffered, cursed the corn  
that grew  
Rankly to bitter bread on Waterloo.

## xiii.

A deep gloom centred in the deep  
repose;  
The nations stood up mute to count  
their dead:  
And he who owned the NAME which  
vibrated  
Through silence, trusting to his no-  
blest foes  
When earth was all too gray for chiv-  
alry,  
Died of their mercies 'mid the desert  
sea.

## xiv.

O wild St. Helen! very still she kept  
him,  
With a green willow for all pyramid,  
Which stirred a little if the low wind  
did,  
A little more, if pilgrims overwept  
him.  
Disparting the lithe boughs to see the  
clay  
Which seemed to cover his for judg-  
ment-day.

## xv.

Nay, not so long! France kept her  
old affection  
As deeply as the sepulchre the corpse;  
Until, dilated by such love's remorse  
To a new angel of the resurrection,  
She cried, "Behold, thou England! I  
would have  
The dead whereof thou wottest, from  
that grave."

## xvi.

And England answered in the cour-  
tesy  
Which, ancient foes turned lovers,  
may befit, —  
"Take back thy dead! and, when  
thou buriest it,  
Throw in all former strifes 'twixt thee  
and me."  
Amen, mine England! 'tis a courte-  
ous claim:  
But ask a little room too — for thy  
shame!

## xvii.

Because it was not well, it was not  
well,  
Nor tuneful with thy lofty-chanted  
part  
Among the Oceanides, — that heart  
To bind and bare and vex with vulture  
fell.  
I would, my noble England, men  
might seek  
All crimson stains upon thy breast —  
not cheek!

## xviii.

I would that hostile fleets had scarred  
Torbay,  
Instead of the lone ship which waited  
moored  
Until thy princely purpose was as-  
sured,  
Then left a shadow, not to pass  
away —  
Not for to-night's moon, nor to-mor-  
row's sun:  
Green watching hills, ye witnessed  
what was done!<sup>1</sup>

## xix.

But since it *was* done, — in sepulchral  
dust  
We fain would pay back something of  
our debt  
To France, if not to honor, and for-  
get  
How through much fear we falsified  
the trust  
Of a fallen foe and exile. We return  
Orestes Electra — in his urn.

## xx.

A little urn — a little dust inside,  
Which once outbalanced the large  
earth, albeit  
To-day a four-years' child might carry  
it  
Sleek-browed and smiling, "Let the  
burden 'bide!"  
Orestes to Electra! — O fair town  
Of Paris, how the wild tears will run  
down

## xxi.

And run back in the chariot-marks of  
time,  
When all the people shall come forth  
to meet

<sup>1</sup> Written at Torquay.

The passive victor, death-still in the  
street  
He rode through 'mid the shouting  
and bell-chime,  
And martial music, under eagles  
which  
Dyed their rapacious beaks at Aus-  
terlitz!

## xxii.

Napoleon! — he hath come again,  
borne home  
Upon the popular ebbing heart, — a  
sea  
Which gathers its own wrecks per-  
petually,  
Majestically moaning. Give him  
room!  
Room for the dead in Paris! welcome  
solemn  
And grave-deep 'neath the cannon-  
moulded column!<sup>1</sup>

## xxiii.

There, weapon-spent and warrior-  
spent, may rest  
From roar of fields, — provided Jupi-  
ter  
Dare trust Saturnus to lie down so  
near  
His bolts! — and this he may; for,  
dispossessed  
Of any godship lies the godlike arm —  
The goat Jove sucked as likely to do  
harm.

## xxiv.

And yet . . . Napoleon! — the re-  
covered name  
Shakes the old easements of the  
world; and we  
Look out upon the passing pageantry,  
Attesting that the Dead makes good  
his claim  
To a French grave, — another king-  
dom won,  
The last, of few spans — by Napole-  
on.

## xxv.

Blood fell like dew beneath his sun-  
rise — sooth!  
But glittered dew-like in the eve-  
nanted  
Meridian light. He was a despot —  
granted!

<sup>1</sup> It was the first intention to bury him  
under the column.

But the *avros* of his autoeratic mouth  
Said yea i' the people's French: he  
magnified  
The image of the freedom he denied.

## XXVI.

And if they asked for rights, he made  
reply,  
"Ye have my glory!"—and so,  
drawing round them  
His ample purple, glorified and bound  
them  
In an embrace that seemed identity.  
He ruled them like a tyrant—true!  
but none  
Were ruled like slaves: each felt  
Napoleon.

## XXVII.

I do not praise this man: the man  
was flawed  
For Adam—much more, Christ!—  
his knee unbent,  
His hand unclean, his aspiration pent  
Within a sword-sweep—pshaw!—  
but, since he had  
The genius to be loved, why, let him  
have  
The justice to be honored in his  
grave.

## XXVIII.

I think this nation's tears thus poured  
together  
Better than shouts. I think this fun-  
eral  
Grander than crownings, though a  
pope bless all.  
I think this grave stronger than  
thrones. But, whether  
The crowned Napoleon or the buried  
clay  
Be worthier, I discern not: angels  
may.

## TO FLUSH MY DOG.

## I.

Loving friend, the gift of one  
Who her own true faith has run  
Through thy lower nature,<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This dog was the gift of my dear and  
admired friend, Miss Mitford, and belongs  
to the beautiful race she has rendered cele-  
brated among English and American read-

Be my benediction said  
With my hand upon thy head,  
Gentle fellow-creature!

## II.

Like a lady's ringlets brown,  
Flow thy silken ears adown  
Either side demurely  
Of thy silver-suited breast,  
Shining out from all the rest  
Of thy body purely.

## III.

Darkly brown thy body is,  
Till the sunshine striking this  
Alchemize its dulness,  
When the sleek curls manifold  
Flash all over into gold  
With a burnished fulness.

## IV.

Underneath my stroking hand,  
Startled eyes of hazel bland  
Kindling, growing larger,  
Up thou leapest with a spring,  
Full of prank and curvetting,  
Leaping like a charger.

## V.

Leap! thy broad tail waves a light,  
Leap! thy slender feet are bright,  
Canopied in fringes;  
Leap! those tasselled ears of thine  
Flicker strangely, fair and fine  
Down their golden inches.

## VI.

Yet, my pretty sportive friend,  
Little is't to such an end  
That I praise thy rareness:  
Other dogs may be thy peers  
Haply in these drooping ears  
And this glossy fairness.

## VII.

But of *thee* it shall be said,  
This dog watched beside a bed  
Day and night unwearied, —  
Watched within a curtained room  
Where no sunbeam brake the gloom,  
Round the sick and dreary.

ers. The Flushes have their laurels as well  
as the Cæsars, the chief difference (at least  
the very head and front of it) consisting,  
perhaps, in the bald head of the latter under  
the crown. 1844.

## VIII.

Roses, gathered for a vase,  
In that chamber died apace,  
Beam and breeze resigning:  
This dog only waited on,  
Knowing, that, when light is gone,  
Love remains for shining.

## IX.

Other dogs in thymy dew  
Tracked the hares, and followed  
through  
Sunny moor or meadow:  
This dog only crept and crept  
Next a languid cheek that slept,  
Sharing in the shadow.

## X.

Other dogs of loyal cheer  
Bounded at the whistle clear,  
Up the woodside hieing:  
This dog only watched in reach  
Of a faintly uttered speech,  
Or a louder sighing.

## XI.

And if one or two quick tears  
Dropped upon his glossy ears,  
Or a sigh came double,  
Up he sprang in eager haste,  
Fawning, fondling, breathing fast,  
In a tender trouble.

## XII.

And this dog was satisfied  
If a pale, thin hand would glide  
Down his dewlaps sloping, —  
Which he pushed his nose within,  
After, — platforming his chin  
On the palm left open.

## XIII.

This dog, if a friendly voice  
Call him now to blither choice  
Than such chamber-keeping,  
“Come out!” praying from the door,  
Presseth backward as before,  
Up against me leaping.

## XIV.

Therefore to this dog will I,  
Tenderly not scornfully,  
Render praise and favor:

With my hand upon his head,  
Is my benediction said  
Therefore and forever.

## XV.

And because he loves me so,  
Better than his kind will do  
Often man or woman,  
Give I back more love again  
Than dogs often take of men,  
Leaning from my human.

## XVI.

Blessings on thee, dog of mine,  
Pretty collars make thee fine,  
Sugared milk make fat thee!  
Pleasures wag on in thy tail,  
Hands of gentle motion fail  
Nevermore to pat thee!

## XVII.

Downy pillow take thy head,  
Silken coverlet bestead,  
Sunshine help thy sleeping!  
No fly's buzzing wake thee up,  
No man break thy purple cup  
Set for drinking deep in!

## XVIII.

Whiskered cats aroynted flee,  
Sturdy stoppers keep from thee  
Cologne distillations;  
Nuts lie in thy path for stones,  
And thy feast-day macaroons  
Turn to daily rations!

## XIX.

Mock I thee, in wishing weal?  
Tears are in my eyes to feel  
Thou art made so straitly:  
Blessings need must straiten too, —  
Little canst thou joy or do,  
Thou who lovest *greatly*.

## XX.

Yet be blessèd to the height  
Of all good and all delight  
Pervious to thy nature;  
Only *loved* beyond that line,  
With a love that answers thine,  
Loving fellow-creature!



“A circle smooth of mossy ground  
Beneath a poplar tree.” — Page 349.

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## THE DESERTED GARDEN.

I MIND me, in the days departed,  
How often underneath the sun  
With childish bounds I used to run  
To a garden long deserted.

The beds and walks were vanished  
quite;

And whereso'er had struck the spade,  
The greenest grasses Nature laid  
To sanctify her right.

I called the place my wilderness,  
For no one entered there but I:  
The sheep looked in the grass to espy,  
And passed it ne'ertheless.

The trees were interwoven wild,  
And spread their boughs enough  
about  
To keep both sheep and shepherd out,  
But not a happy child.

Adventurous joy it was for me!  
I crept beneath the boughs, and found  
A circle smooth of mossy ground  
Beneath a poplar-tree.

Old garden rose-trees hedged it in,  
Bedropt with roses waxen-white  
Well satisfied with dew and light,  
And careless to be seen.

Long years ago, it might befall,  
When all the garden-flowers were  
trim,  
The grave old gardener prided him  
On these the most of all

Some lady, stately overmuch,  
Here moving with a silken noise,  
Has blushed beside them at the voice  
That likened her to such.

And these, to make a diadem,  
She often may have plucked and  
twined,  
Half-smiling as it came to mind  
That few would look at *them*.

Oh, little thought that lady proud,  
A child would watch her fair white  
rose,  
When buried lay her whiter brows,  
And silk was changed for shroud!

Nor thought that gardener (full of  
scorns  
For men unlearned and simple  
phrase),  
A child would bring it all its praise  
By creeping through the thorns.

To me upon my low moss seat,  
Though never a dream the roses sent  
Of science or love's compliment,  
I ween they smelt as sweet.

It did not move my grief to see  
The trace of human step departed:  
Because the garden was deserted,  
The blither place for me.

Friends, blame me not! a narrow ken  
Has childhood 'twixt the sun and  
sword:  
We draw the moral afterward,  
We feel the gladness then.

And gladdest hours for me did glide  
In silence at the rose-tree wall:  
A thrush made gladness musical  
Upon the other side.

Nor he nor I did e'er incline  
To peck or pluck the blossoms white:  
How should I know but roses might  
Lead lives as glad as mine?

To make my hermit-home complete,  
I brought clear water from the spring  
Praised in its own low murmuring,  
And cresses glossy wet.

And so, I thought, my likeness grew  
(Without the melancholy tale)  
To "gentle hermit of the dale,"  
And Angelina too.

For oft I read within my nook  
Such minstrel stories, till the breeze  
Made sounds poetic in the trees,  
And then I shut the book.

If I shut this wherein I write,  
I hear no more the wind athwart  
Those trees, nor feel that childish  
heart  
Delighting in delight.

My childhood from my life is parted,  
My footstep from the moss which  
drew  
Its fairy circle round: anew  
The garden is deserted.

Another thrush may there rehearse  
The madrigals which sweetest are:  
No more for me! myself afar  
Do sing a sadder verse.

Ah me, ah me! when erst I lay  
In that child's-nest so greenly  
wrought,  
I laughed unto myself, and thought  
"The time will pass away."

And still I laughed, and did not fear  
But that, whene'er was passed away  
The childish time, some happier play  
My womanhood would cheer.

I knew the time would pass away,  
And yet, beside the rose-tree wall,  
Dear God, how seldom, if at all,  
Did I look up to pray!

The time is past; and now that grows  
The eypress high among the trees,  
And I behold white sepulchres,  
As well as the white rose, —

When graver, meeker thoughts are  
given,  
And I have learnt to lift my face,  
Reminded how earth's greenest place  
The color draws from heaven, —

It something saith for earthly pain,  
But more for heavenly promise free,  
That I who was, would shrink to be  
That happy child again.

## MY DOVES.

"O Weisheit! Du red'st wie eine Taube!"  
GOETHE.

My little doves have left a nest  
Upon an Indian tree,  
Whose leaves fantastic take their rest  
Or motion from the sea:  
For ever there the sea-winds go  
With sunlit paces to and fro.

The tropic flowers looked up to it,  
The tropic stars looked down;  
And there my little doves did sit,  
With feathers softly brown,

And glittering eyes that showed  
their right  
To general nature's deep delight.

And God them taught at every close  
Of murmuring waves beyond  
And green leaves round, to interpose  
Their choral voices fond,  
Interpreting that love must be  
The meaning of the earth and sea.

Fit ministers! Of living loves  
Theirs hath the calmest fashion,  
Their living voice the likeliest moves  
To lifeless intonation  
The lovely monotone of springs  
And winds and such insensate things.

My little doves were ta'en away  
From that glad nest of theirs,  
Across an ocean rolling gray,  
And tempest-clouded air, —  
My little doves, who lately knew  
The sky and wave by warmth and  
blue.

And now, within the city prison,  
In mist and chillness pent,  
With sudden upward look they listen  
For sounds of past content, —  
For lapse of water, swell of breeze,  
Or nut-fruit falling from the trees.

The stir without the glow of passion,  
The triumph of the mart,  
The gold and silver as they elash on  
Man's cold metallic heart,  
The roar of wheels, the cry for bread:  
These only sounds are heard instead.

Yet still, as on my human hand  
Their fearless heads they lean,  
And almost seem to understand  
What human musings mean,  
(Their eyes with such a plaintive  
shine  
Are fastened upwardly to mine!)

Soft falls their chant as on the nest  
Beneath the sunny zone;  
For love that stirred it in their breast  
Has not aweary grown,  
And 'neath the city's shade can keep  
The well of music clear and deep.

And love that keeps the music fills  
With pastoral memories:  
All echoings from out the hills,

All droppings from the skies,  
All flowings from the wave and wind,  
Remembered in their chant, I find.

So teach ye me the wisest part,  
My little doves! to move  
Along the city-ways with heart  
Assured by holy love,  
And vocal with such songs as own  
A fountain to the world unknown.

'Twas hard to sing by Babel's  
stream —  
More hard in Babel's street;  
But if the soulless creatures deem  
Their music not unmeet  
For sunless walls, let *us* begin,  
Who wear immortal wings within!

To me, fair memories belong  
Of scenes that used to bless,  
For no regret, but present song  
And lasting thankfulness,  
And very soon to break away,  
Like types, in purer things than they.

I will have hopes that cannot fade,  
For flowers the valley yields;  
I will have humble thoughts instead  
Of silent, dewy fields;  
My spirit and my God shall be  
My seaward hill, my boundless sea.

## HECTOR IN THE GAR- DEN.

### I.

NINE years old! The first of any  
Seem the happiest years that come;  
Yet when *I* was nine, I said  
No such word! I thought instead  
That the Greeks had used as many  
In besieging Ilium.

### II.

Nine green years had scarcely brought  
me  
To my childhood's haunted spring:  
I had life, like flowers and bees,  
In betwixt the country trees;  
And the sun the pleasure taught me  
Which he teacheth every thing.

### III.

If the rain fell, there was sorrow,  
Little head leant on the pane,  
Little finger drawing down it  
The long trailing drops upon it,  
And the "Rain, rain, come to-mor-  
row,"  
Said for charm against the rain.

### IV.

Such a charm was right Canidian.  
Though you meet it with a jeer:  
If I said it long enough,  
Then the rain hummed dimly off,  
And the thrush with his pure Lydian  
Was left only to the ear;

### V.

And the sun and I together  
Went a-rushing out of doors:  
We our tender spirits drew  
Over hill and dale in view,  
Glimmering hither, glimmering thith-  
er,  
In the footsteps of the showers.

### VI.

Underneath the chestnuts dripping,  
Through the grasses wet and fair,  
Straight I sought my garden-ground,  
With the laurel on the mound,  
And the pear-tree oversweeping  
A side-shadow of green air.

### VII.

In the garden lay supinely  
A huge giant wrought of spade;  
Arms and legs were stretched at  
length  
In a passive giant strength, —  
The fine meadow-turf, cut finely,  
Round them laid and interlaid.

### VIII.

Call him Hector, son of Priam!  
Such his title and degree.  
With my rake I smoothed his brow,  
Both his cheeks I weeded through;  
But a rhymer such as I am,  
Scarce can sing his dignity.

### IX.

Eyes of gentianellas azure,  
Staring, winking at the skies;  
Nose of gillyflowers and box;  
Scented grasses put for locks,  
Which a little breeze at pleasure  
Set a-waving round his eyes:

## X.

Brazen helm of daffodillies,  
 With a glitter toward the light;  
 Purple violets for the mouth,  
 Breathing perfumes west and south;  
 And a sword of flashing lilies,  
 Holden ready for the fight:

## XI.

And a breastplate made of daisies,  
 Closely fitting, leaf on leaf;  
 Periwinkles interlaced  
 Drawn for belt about the waist;  
 While the brown bees, humming  
 praises,  
 Shot their arrows round the chief.

## XII.

And who knows (I sometimes wondered.)  
 If the disembodied soul  
 Of old Hector once of Troy  
 Might not take a dreary joy  
 Here to enter — if it thundered,  
 Rolling up the thunder-roll?

## XIII.

Rolling this way from Troy-ruin,  
 In this body rude and rife  
 Just to enter, and take rest  
 'Neath the daisies of the breast —  
 They, with tender roots, renewing  
 His heroic heart to life?

## XIV.

Who could know? I sometimes started  
 At a motion or a sound!  
 Did his mouth speak, naming Troy  
 With an *οτοτοτοτο*?  
 Did the pulse of the Strong-hearted  
 Make the daisies tremble round?

## XV.

It was hard to answer, often;  
 But the birds sang in the tree,  
 But the little birds sang bold  
 In the pear-tree green and old,  
 And my terror seemed to soften  
 Through the courage of their glee.

## XVI.

Oh the birds, the tree, the ruddy  
 And white blossoms sleek with rain!  
 Oh, my garden rich with pansies!

Oh, my childhood's bright romances!  
 All revive, like Hector's body,  
 And I see them stir again.

## XVII.

And despite life's changes, chances,  
 And despite the deathbell's toll,  
 They press on me in full seeming:  
 Help, some angel! stay this dreaming!  
 As the birds sang in the branches,  
 Sing God's patience through my soul!

## XVIII.

That no dreamer, no neglecter  
 Of the present's work unsped,  
 I may wake up and be doing,  
 Life's heroic ends pursuing,  
 Though my past is dead as Hector,  
 And though Hector is twice dead

## SLEEPING AND WATCHING.

## I.

SLEEP on, baby, on the floor,  
 Tired of all the playing;  
 Sleep with smile the sweeter for  
 That you dropped away in.  
 On your curls' full roundness stand  
 Golden lights serenely;  
 One cheek pushed out by the hand  
 Folds the dimple inly:  
 Little head and little foot,  
 Heavy laid for pleasure,  
 Underneath the lids half-shut,  
 Slants the shining azure.  
 Open-soul in noonday sun,  
 So you lie and slumber:  
 Nothing evil having done,  
 Nothing can encumber.

## II.

I who cannot sleep as well,  
 Shall I sigh to view you?  
 Or sigh further to foretell  
 All that may undo you?

Nay, keep smiling, little child,  
 Ere the sorrow neareth:  
 I will smile too: patience mild  
 Pleasure's token weareth.  
 Nay, keep sleeping before loss:  
 I shall sleep though losing —  
 As by cradle, so by cross,  
 Sure is the reposing.

## III.

And God knows who sees us twain,  
 Child at childish leisure,  
 I am near as tired of pain  
 As you seem of pleasure.  
 Very soon too, by his grace  
 Gently wrapt around me,  
 Shall I show as calm a face,  
 Shall I sleep as soundly, —  
 Differing in this, that you  
 Clasp your playthings, sleeping,  
 While my hand shall drop the few  
 Given to my keeping;  
 Differing in this, that I  
 Sleeping shall be colder,  
 And in waking presently,  
 Brighter to beholder;  
 Differing in this beside  
 (Sleeper, have you heard me?  
 Do you move, and open wide  
 Eyes of wonder toward me?) —  
 That while you I thus recall  
 From your sleep, I solely,  
 Me from mine an angel shall,  
 With reveille holy.

## SOUNDS.

Ηκουσας η ουκ ηκουσας; —  
 ÆSCHYLUS.

## I.

HARKEN, harken!  
 The rapid river carrieth  
 Many noises underneath  
 The hoary ocean:  
 Teaching his solemnity  
 Sounds of inland life and glee  
 Learnt beside the waving tree  
 When the winds in summer prank  
 Toss the shades from bank to bank,  
 And the rather rains, in emotion  
 Which rather gladdens earth than  
 grieves,

Count and visibly rehearse  
 The pulses of the universe  
 Upon the summer leaves —  
 Learnt among the lilies straight,  
 When they bow them to the weight  
 Of many bees whose hidden hum  
 Seemeth from themselves to come —  
 Learnt among the grasses green  
 Where the rustling mice are seen  
 By the gleaming, as they run,  
 Of their quick eyes in the sun;  
 And lazy sheep are browsing through  
 With their noses trailed in dew;  
 And the squirrel leaps adown,  
 Holding fast the filbert brown;  
 And the lark, with more of mirth  
 In his song than suits the earth,  
 Droppeth some in soaring high,  
 To pour the rest out in the sky;  
 While the woodland doves apart  
 In the copse's leafy heart,  
 Solitary, not ascetic,  
 Hidden and yet vocal, seem  
 Joining in a lovely psalm,  
 Man's despondence, nature's calm,  
 Half mystical and half pathetic,  
 Like a singing in a dream.<sup>1</sup>  
 All these sounds the river telleth,  
 Softened to an undertone  
 Which ever and anon he swelleth  
 By a burden of his own,  
 In the ocean's ear:  
 Ay, and ocean seems to hear  
 With an inward gentle scorn,  
 Smiling to his caverns worn.

## II.

Harken, harken!  
 The child is shouting at his play  
 Just in the tramping funeral's way;  
 The widow moans as she turns aside  
 To shun the face of the blushing  
 bride,

<sup>1</sup> "While floating up bright forms ideal,  
 Mistress or friend, around me stream;  
 Half sense-supplied, and half unreal,  
 Like music mingling with a dream."  
 JOHN KENTON.

I do not doubt that the "music" of the two concluding lines mingled, though very unconsciously, with my own "dream," and gave their form and pressure to the above distich. The ideas however being sufficiently distinct, I am satisfied with sending this note to the press after my verses, and with acknowledging another obligation to the valued friend to whom I already owe so many. 1844.

While, shaking the tower of the ancient church,  
 The marriage-bells do swing;  
 And in the shadow of the porch  
 An idiot sits with his lean hands full  
 Of hedgerow flowers and a poet's skull,  
 Laughing loud and gibbering  
 Because it is so brown a thing,  
 While he sticketh the gaudy poppies red  
 In and out the senseless head  
 Where all sweet fancies grew instead.  
 And you may hear at the self-same time  
 Another poet who reads his rhyme,  
 Low as a brook in summer air,  
 Save when he droppeth his voice adown  
 To dream of the amaranthine crown  
 His mortal brows shall wear;  
 And a baby cries with a feeble sound  
 'Neath the weary weight of the life new-found;  
 And an old man groans — with his testament  
 Only half-signed — for the life that's spent;  
 And lovers twain do softly say,  
 As they sit on a grave, "For aye, for aye;"  
 And foemen twain, while Earth their mother  
 Looks greenly upward, curse each other;  
 A schoolboy drones his task, with looks  
 Cast over the page to the elm-tree rooks;  
 A lonely student cries aloud  
*Eureka!* clasping at his shroud;  
 A beldame's age-cracked voice doth sing  
 To a little infant slumbering;  
 A maid forgotten weeps alone,  
 Muffling her sobs on the trysting-stone;  
 A sick man wakes at his own mouth's wail;  
 A gossip coughs in her thrice-told tale;  
 A muttering gamester shakes the dice;  
 A reaper foretells good luck from the skies;  
 A monarch vows as he lifts his hand to them;  
 A patriot, leaving his native land to them

Cries to the world against perjured state;  
 A priest disserts  
 Upon linen skirts;  
 A sinner screams for one hope more;  
 A dancer's feet do palpitate  
 A piper's music out on the floor;  
 And nigh to the awful Dead, the living  
 Low speech and stealthy steps are giving,  
 Because he cannot hear;  
 And *he* who on that narrow bier  
 Has room enough is closely wound  
 In a silence piercing more than sound.

## III.

Harken, harken!  
 God speaketh to thy soul,  
 Using the supreme voice which doth confound  
 All life with consciousness of Deity,  
 All senses into one, —  
 As the seer-saint of Patmos, loving John  
 (For whom did backward roll  
 The cloud-gate of the future) turned  
 to see  
 The Voice which spake. It speaketh now,  
 Through the regular breath of the calm creation,  
 Through the moan of the creature's desolation  
 Striking, and in its stroke resembling  
 The memory of a solemn vow  
 Which pierceth the din of a festival  
 To one in the midst, — and he letteth fall  
 The cup with a sudden trembling.

## IV.

Harken, harken!  
 God speaketh in thy soul,  
 Saying, "O thou that movest  
 With feeble steps across this earth of mine,  
 To break beside the fount thy golden bowl  
 And spill its purple wine, —  
 Look up to heaven and see how like a scroll  
 My right hand hath thine immortality  
 In an eternal grasping! thou that lovest

The songful birds and grasses under-foot,  
 And also what change mars and tombs pollute —  
 I am the end of love! give love to *Me!*  
 O thou that sinnest, grace doth more abound  
 Than all thy sin! sit still beneath my rood,

And count the droppings of my victim-blood,  
 And seek none other sound!"

v.

Harken, harken!  
 Shall we hear the lapsing river  
 And our brother's sighing ever,  
 And not the voice of God?

## SONNETS.

## THE SOUL'S EXPRESSION.

WITH stammering lips and insufficient sound  
 I strive and struggle to deliver right  
 That music of my nature, day and night  
 With dream and thought and feeling interwound,  
 And inly answering all the senses round  
 With octaves of a mystic depth and height  
 Which step out grandly to the infinite  
 From the dark edges of the sensual ground.  
 This song of soul I struggle to outbear  
 Through portals of the sense, sublime and whole,  
 And utter all myself into the air:  
 But if I did it, as the thunder-roll  
 Breaks its own cloud, my flesh would perish there,  
 Before that dread apocalypse of soul.

## THE SERAPH AND POET.

THE seraph sings before the manifest God-One, and in the burning of the Seven,  
 And with the full life of consummate Heaven  
 Heaving beneath him like a mother's breast  
 Warm with her first-born's slumber in that nest.

The poet sings upon the earth grave-riven,  
 Before the naughty world, soon self-forgiven  
 For wronging him; and in the darkness prest  
 From his own soul by worldly weights.  
 Even so  
 Sing, seraph with the glory! heaven is high;  
 Sing, poet with the sorrow! earth is low;  
 The universe's inward voices cry  
 "Amen" to either song of joy and woe;  
 Sing, seraph, poet, sing on equally!

## BEREAVEMENT.

WHEN some beloveds, 'neath whose eyelids lay  
 The sweet lights of my childhood, one by one,  
 Did leave me dark before the natural sun,  
 And I astounded fell, and could not pray,  
 A thought within me to myself did say,  
 "Is God less God, that *thou* art left undone?  
 Rise, worship, bless him in this sack-cloth spun,  
 As in that purple!" But I answered,  
 "Nay!"

What child his filial heart in words  
 can loose  
 If he behold his tender father raise  
 The hand that chastens sorely? can  
 he choose  
 But sob in silence with an upward  
 gaze? —  
 And *my* great Father, thinking fit to  
 bruise,  
 Discerns in speechless tears both  
 prayer and praise."

#### CONSOLATION.

ALL are not taken: there are left be-  
 hind  
 Living beloveds, tender looks to bring  
 And make the daylight still a happy  
 thing,  
 And tender voices to make soft the  
 wind:  
 But if it were not so, if I could find  
 No love in all the world for comfort-  
 ing,  
 Nor any path but hollowly did ring  
 Where "dust to dust" the love from  
 life disjoined,  
 And if, before those sepulchres un-  
 moving  
 I stood alone (as some forsaken lamb  
 Goes bleating up the moors in weary  
 dearth),  
 Crying, "Where are ye, 'O my loved  
 and loving?"  
 I know a Voice would sound,  
 "Daughter, I AM.  
 Can I suffice for HEAVEN and not for  
 earth?"

#### TO MARY RUSSELL MIT- FORD.

##### IN HER GARDEN.

WHAT time I lay these rhymes anear  
 thy feet,  
 Benignant friend, I will not proudly  
 say  
 As better poets use, "These *flowers* I  
 lay,"  
 Because I would not wrong thy roses  
 sweet,  
 Blaspheming so their name. And  
 yet repeat

Thou, overleaning them this spring-  
 time day,  
 With heart as open to love as theirs to  
 May,  
 — "Low-rooted verse may reach some  
 heavenly heat,  
 Even like my blossoms, if as nature-  
 true,  
 Though not as precious." Thou art  
 unperplexed,  
 Dear friend, in whose dear writings  
 drops the dew,  
 And blow the natural airs, — thou,  
 who art next  
 To nature's self in cheering the world's  
 view,  
 To preach a sermon on so known a  
 text!

#### ON A PORTRAIT OF WORDS- WORTH BY B. R. HAYDON.

WORDSWORTH upon Helvellyn! Let  
 the cloud  
 Ebb audibly along the mountain-wind,  
 Then break against the rock, and show  
 behind  
 The lowland valleys floating up to  
 crowd  
 The sense with beauty. He with  
 forehead bowed  
 And humble-lidded eyes, as one in-  
 clined  
 Before the sovran thought of his own  
 mind,  
 And very meek with inspirations  
 proud,  
 Takes here his rightful place as poet-  
 priest  
 By the high altar, singing prayer and  
 prayer  
 To the higher Heavens. A noble vis-  
 ion free  
 Our Haydon's hand has flung out from  
 the mist:  
 No portrait this, with academic air!  
 This is the poet and his poetry.

#### PAST AND FUTURE.

My future will not copy fair my past  
 On any leaf but heaven's. Be fully  
 done,  
 Supernal Will! I would not fain be  
 one,



Who, satisfying thirst and breaking  
fast,  
Upon the fulness of the heart at last  
Says no grace after meat. My wine  
has run  
Indeed out of my cup, and there is  
none  
To gather up the bread of my repast  
Scattered and trampled; yet I find  
some good  
In earth's green herbs, and streams  
that bubble up  
Clear from the darkling ground, —  
content until  
I sit with angels before better food.  
Dear Christ! when thy new vintage  
fills my cup,  
This hand shall shake no more, nor  
that wine spill.

---

IRREPARABLENESS.

I HAVE been in the meadows all the  
day,  
And gathered there the nosegay that  
you see,  
Singing within myself as bird or bee,  
When such do field-work on a morn  
of May.  
But, now I look upon my flowers, de-  
cay  
Has met them in my hands more fa-  
tally  
Because more warmly clasped; and  
sobs are free  
To come instead of songs. What do  
you say,  
Sweet counsellors, dear friends? that  
I should go  
Back straightway to the fields and  
gather more?  
Another, sooth, may do it; but not I!  
My heart is very tired, my strength is  
low,  
My hands are full of blossoms plucked  
before,  
Held dead within them till myself  
shall die.

---

TEARS.

THANK God, bless God, all ye who  
suffer not  
More grief than ye can weep for.  
That is well;

That is light grieving! lighter, none  
befell  
Since Adam forfeited the primal lot.  
Tears! — what are tears? The babe  
weeps in its cot.  
The mother singing; at her marriage-  
bell  
The bride weeps; and before the ora-  
cle  
Of high-faned hills the poet has forgot  
Such moisture on his cheeks. Thank  
God for grace,  
Ye who weep only! If, as some have  
done,  
Ye grope tear-blinded in a desert  
place,  
And touch but tombs, look up!  
those tears will run  
Soon in long rivers down the lifted  
face,  
And leave the vision clear for stars  
and sun.

---

GRIEF.

I TELL you hopeless grief is passion-  
less;  
That only men incredulous of despair,  
Half-taught in anguish, through the  
midnight air  
Beat upward to God's throne in loud  
access  
Of shrieking and reproach. Full des-  
ertness,  
In souls as countries, lieth silent-bare  
Under the blanching, vertical eye-  
glare  
Of the absolute heavens. Deep-  
hearted man, express  
Grief for thy dead in silence like to  
death —  
Most like a monumental statue set  
In everlasting watch and moveless  
woe  
Till itself crumble to the dust beneath.  
Touch it; the marble eyelids are not  
wet;  
If it could weep, it could arise and go.

---

SUBSTITUTION.

WHEN some beloved voice that was  
to you  
Both sound and sweetness faileth  
suddenly,

And silence against which you dare  
 not cry  
 Aches round you like a strong dis-  
 ease and new,  
 What hope? what help? what music  
 will undo  
 That silence to your sense? Not  
 friendship's sigh;  
 Not reason's subtle count; not mel-  
 ody  
 Of viols, nor of pipes that Faunus  
 blew;  
 Not songs of poets, nor of nightin-  
 gales  
 Whose hearts leap upward through  
 the cypress-trees  
 To the clear moon; nor yet the spheric  
 laws  
 Self-chanted, nor the angels' sweet  
 All-hails,  
 Met in the smile of God: nay, none  
 of these.  
 Speak THOU, availing Christ! and fill  
 this pause.

---

COMFORT.

SPEAK low to me, my Saviour, low  
 and sweet  
 From out the hallelujahs sweet and  
 low,  
 Lest I should fear and fall, and miss  
 thee so,  
 Who art not missed by any that en-  
 treat.  
 Speak to me as to Mary at thy  
 feet!  
 And if no precious gums my hands  
 bestow,  
 Let my tears drop like amber while I  
 go  
 In reach of thy divinest voice com-  
 plete  
 In humanest affection, — thus, in  
 sooth,  
 To lose the sense of losing; as a  
 child,  
 Whose song-bird seeks the wood for-  
 evermore,  
 Is sung to in its stead by mother's  
 mouth  
 Till, sinking on her breast, love-recon-  
 ciled,  
 He sleeps the faster that he wept be-  
 fore.

PERPLEXED MUSIC.

AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED TO  
 E. J.

EXPERIENCE, like a pale musician,  
 holds  
 A dulcimer of patience in his hand,  
 Whence harmonies we cannot under-  
 stand,  
 Of God's will in his worlds, the strain  
 unfolds  
 In sad, perplexèd minors: deathly  
 colds  
 Fall on us while we hear, and coun-  
 termand  
 Our sanguine heart back from the  
 fancy-land,  
 With nightingales in visionary wolds.  
 We murmur, "Where is any certain  
 tune  
 Or measured music in such notes as  
 these?  
 But angels, leaning from the golden  
 seat,  
 Are not so minded: their fine ear hath  
 won  
 The issue of completed cadences,  
 And, smiling down the stars, they  
 whisper — SWEET.

---

WORK.

WHAT are we set on earth for? Say,  
 to toil;  
 Nor seek to leave thy tending of the  
 vines  
 For all the heat o' the day, till it  
 declines,  
 And death's mild curfew shall from  
 work assoil.  
 God did anoint thee with his odor-  
 ous oil,  
 To wrestle, not to reign; and he as-  
 signs  
 All thy tears over, like pure crystal-  
 lines,  
 For younger fellow-workers of the  
 soil  
 To wear for amulets. So others  
 shall  
 Take patience, labor, to their heart  
 and hand,  
 From thy hand and thy heart and thy  
 brave cheer,  
 And God's grace fructify through  
 thee to all.

The least flower, with a brimming  
cup may stand  
And share its dewdrop with another  
near.

### FUTURITY.

AND O belovèd voices, upon which  
Ours passionately call, because ere-  
long  
Ye brake off in the middle of that  
song  
We sang together softly, to enrich  
The poor world with the sense of love,  
and witch  
The heart out of things evil, — I am  
strong,  
Knowing ye are not lost for aye  
among  
The hills with last year's thrush.  
God keeps a niche  
In heaven to hold our idols; and al-  
beit  
He brake them to our faces, and de-  
nied  
That our close kisses should impair  
their white,  
I know we shall behold them raised,  
complete,  
The dust swept from their beauty, —  
glorified  
New Memnons singing in the great  
God-light.

### THE TWO SAYINGS.

TWO sayings of the Holy Scriptures  
beat  
Like pulses in the church's brow and  
breast;  
And by them we find rest in our un-  
rest,  
And, heart-deep in salt tears, do yet  
entreat,  
God's fellowship as if on heavenly  
seat.  
The first is, JESUS WEPT, whereon is  
prest  
Full many a sobbing face that drops  
its best  
And sweetest waters on the record  
sweet:  
And one is where the Christ, denied  
and scorned,  
LOOKED UPON PETER. Oh, to render  
plain,

By help of having loved a little, and  
mourned,  
That look of sovran love and sovran  
pain  
Which HE, who could not sin yet suf-  
fered, turned  
On him who could reject, but not sus-  
tain!

### THE LOOK.

THE Saviour looked on Peter. Ay,  
no word,  
No gesture of reproach: the heavens  
serene,  
Though heavy with armed justice, did  
not lean  
Their thunders that way: the forsaken  
Lord  
Looked only on the traitor. None re-  
cord  
What that look was, none guess; for  
those who have seen  
Wronged lovers loving through a  
death-pang keen,  
Or pale-checked martyrs smiling to a  
sword,  
Have missed Jehovah at the judg-  
ment-call.  
And Peter, from the height of blas-  
phemy, —  
"I never knew this man" — did quail  
and fall  
As knowing straight THAT GOD, and  
turnèd free  
And went out speechless from the  
face of all,  
And filled the silence, weeping bitter-  
ly.

### THE MEANING OF THE LOOK.

I THINK that look of Christ might  
seem to say,  
"Thou Peter! art thou, then, a com-  
mon stone  
Which I at last must break my heart  
upon,  
For all God's charge to his high an-  
gels may  
Guard my foot better? Did I yester-  
day  
Wash *thy* feet, my beloved, that they  
should run  
Quick to deny me 'neath the morning  
sun?

And do thy kisses, like the rest, be-  
tray?  
The cock crows coldly. — Go, and  
manifest  
A late contrition, but no bootless  
fear;  
For, when thy final need is dreariest,  
Thou shalt not be denied, as I am  
here:  
My voice to God and angels shall at-  
test,  
*Because I know this man, let him be  
clear."*

A THOUGHT FOR A LONE-  
LY DEATH-BED.

INSCRIBED TO MY FRIEND E. C.

IF God compel thee to this destiny,  
To die alone, with none beside thy  
bed  
To ruffle round with sobs thy last  
word said,  
And mark with tears the pulses ebb  
from thee,  
Pray then alone, "O Christ, come ten-  
derly!  
By thy forsaken Sonship in the red  
Drear wine-press, by the wilderness  
outspread,  
And the lone garden where thine  
agony  
Fell bloody from thy brow, — by all  
of those  
Permitted desolations, comfort mine!  
No earthly friend being near me, in-  
terpose  
No deathly angel 'twixt my face and  
thine,  
But stoop thyself to gather my life's  
rose,  
And smile away my mortal to di-  
vine!"

WORK AND CONTEMPLA-  
TION.

THE woman singeth at her spinning-  
wheel  
A pleasant chant, ballad, or barcarole;  
She thinketh of her song, upon the  
whole,  
Far more than of her flax; and yet  
the reel  
Is full, and artfully her fingers feel

With quick adjustment, provident  
control,  
The lines, too subtly twisted to un-  
roll,  
Out to a perfect thread. I hence ap-  
peal  
To the dear Christian Church, that  
we may do  
Our Father's business in these tem-  
ples mirk,  
Thus swift and steadfast, thus intent  
and strong;  
While thus, apart from toil, our souls  
pursue  
Some high, calm, spheric tune, and  
prove our work  
The better for the sweetness of our  
song.

PAIN IN PLEASURE.

A THOUGHT lay like a flower upon  
mine heart,  
And drew around it other thoughts  
like bees,  
For multitude and thirst of sweet-  
nesses:  
Whereat rejoicing, I desired the art  
Of the Greek whistler, who to wharf  
and mart  
Could lure those insect swarms from  
orange-trees,  
That I might live with me such  
thoughts, and please  
My soul so always. Foolish counter-  
part  
Of a weak man's vain wishes! While  
I spoke,  
The thought I called a flower grew  
nettle-rough,  
The thoughts called bees stung me  
to festering:  
Oh, entertain (cried Reason as she  
woke,  
Your best and gladdest thoughts but  
long enough,  
And they will all prove sad enough to  
sting!

FLUSH OR FAUNUS.

You see this dog: it was but yester-  
day  
I mused, forgetful of his presence here,  
Till thought on thought drew down-  
ward tear on tear:

When from the pillow where wet-  
 checked I lay,  
 A head as hairy as Faunus thrust its  
 way  
 Right sudden against my face, two  
 golden-clear  
 Great eyes astonished mine, a droop-  
 ing ear  
 Did flap me on either cheek to dry the  
 spray!  
 I started first as some Areadian  
 Amazed by goatly god in twilight  
 grove;  
 But, as the bearded vision closelier  
 ran  
 My tears off, I knew Flush, and rose  
 above  
 Surprise and sadness, thanking the  
 true PAN  
 Who by low creatures leads to heights  
 of love.

## FINITE AND INFINITE.

THE wind sounds only in opposing  
 straits,  
 The sea beside the shore; man's  
 spirit rends  
 Its quiet only up against the ends  
 Of wants and oppositions, loves and  
 hates,  
 Where, worked and worn by passion-  
 ate debates,  
 And losing by the loss it apprehends,  
 The flesh rocks round, and every  
 breath it sends  
 Is ravelled to a sigh. All tortured  
 states  
 Suppose a straitened place. Jehovah,  
 Lord,  
 Make room for rest, around me! out  
 of sight  
 Now float me, of the vexing land ab-  
 horred,  
 Till, in deep calms of space, my soul  
 may right  
 Her nature, shoot large sail on length-  
 ening cord,  
 And rush exultant on the Infinite.

## AN APPREHENSION.

If all the gentlest-hearted friends I  
 know  
 Concentred in one heart their gentle-  
 ness,

That still grew gentler till its pulse  
 was less  
 For life than pity, I should yet be  
 slow  
 To bring my own heart nakedly be-  
 low  
 The palm of such a friend, that he  
 should press  
 Motive, condition, means, appli-  
 ances,  
 My false ideal joy and fickle  
 woe,  
 Out full to light and knowledge: I  
 should fear  
 Some plait between the brows, some  
 rougher chime  
 In the free voice. O angels, let your  
 flood  
 Of bitter scorn dash on me! do ye  
 hear  
 What *I* say who bear calmly all the  
 time  
 This everlasting face to face with  
 GOD?

## DISCONTENT.

LIGHT human nature is too lightly  
 tost  
 And ruffled without cause, complain-  
 ing on,  
 Restless with rest, until, being over-  
 thrown,  
 It learneth to lie quiet. Let a  
 frost  
 Or a small wasp have crept to the  
 innermost  
 Of our ripe peach, or let the wilful  
 sun  
 Shine westward of our window,  
 straight we run  
 A furlong's sigh, as if the world were  
 lost.  
 But what time through the heart and  
 through the brain  
 God hath transfixed us, we, so moved  
 before,  
 Attain to a calm. Ay, shouldering  
 weights of pain,  
 We anchor in deep waters, safe from  
 shore,  
 And hear, submissive o'er the stormy  
 main  
 God's chartered judgments walk for-  
 evermore.

PATIENCE TAUGHT BY  
NATURE.

'O DREARY life!" we cry, "O dreary,  
life!"  
And still the generations of the birds  
Sing through our sighing, and the  
flocks and herds  
Serenely live while we are keeping  
strife  
With Heaven's true purpose in us, as  
a knife  
Against which we may struggle!  
Ocean girls  
Unslackened the dry land, savannah-  
wards  
Unweary sweep, hills watch unworn,  
and rife  
Meek leaves drop yearly from the  
forest-trees  
To show above the unwasted stars  
that pass  
In their old glory. O thou God of old,  
Grant me some smaller grace than  
comes to these!  
But so much patience as a blade of  
grass  
Grows by, contented through the  
heat and cold.

CHEERFULNESS TAUGHT  
BY REASON.

I THINK we are too ready with com-  
plaint  
In this fair world of God's. Had we  
no hope,  
Indeed, beyond the zenith, and the  
slope  
Of yon gray blank of sky, we might  
grow faint  
To muse upon eternity's constraint  
Round our aspirant souls; but, since  
the scope  
Must widen early, is it well to droop,  
For a few days consumed in loss and  
taint?  
O pusillanimous heart, be comforted,  
And like a cheerful traveller take the  
road,  
Singing beside the hedge. What if  
the bread  
Be bitter in thine inn, and thou un-  
shod

To meet the flints? At least it may  
be said,  
"Because the way is *short*, I thank  
thee, God."

EXAGGERATION.

WE overstate the ills of life, and take  
Imagination (given us to bring down  
The choirs of singing angels over-  
shone  
By God's clear glory) down our earth  
to rake  
The dismal snows instead, flake fol-  
lowing flake,  
To cover all the corn; we walk upon  
The shadow of hills across a level  
thrown,  
And pant like climbers: near the al-  
derbrake  
We sigh so loud, the nightingale with-  
in  
Refuses to sing loud, as else she would.  
O brothers! let us leave the shame  
and sin  
Of taking vainly, in a plaintive mood,  
The holy name of GRIEF!—holy  
herein,  
That by the grief of ONE came all our  
good.

ADEQUACY.

Now, by the verdure on thy thousand  
hills,  
Belovèd England, doth the earth ap-  
pear  
Quite good enough for men to over-  
bear  
The will of God in, with rebellious  
wills!  
We cannot say the morning-sun ful-  
fils  
Ingloriously its course, nor that the  
clear,  
Strong stars without significance in-  
sphere  
Our habitation: we, meantime, our  
ills  
Heap up against this good, and lift a  
cry  
Against this work-day world, this ill-  
spread feast,  
As if ourselves were better certainly  
Than what we come to. Maker and  
High Priest,

I ask thee not my joys to multiply,  
Only to make me worthier of the  
least.

TO GEORGE SAND.

A DESIRE.

THOU large-brained woman and large-  
hearted man,  
Self-called George Sand, whose soul,  
amid the lions  
Of thy tumultuous senses, moans de-  
fiance.  
And answers roar for roar, as spirits  
can,  
I would some mild miraculous thun-  
der ran  
Above the applauded circus, in appli-  
ance  
Of thine own nobler nature's strength  
and science,  
Drawing two pinions, white as wings  
of swan,  
From thy strong shoulders, to amaze  
the place  
With holier light! that thou, to wo-  
man's claim  
And man's, mightst join beside the  
angel's grace  
Of a pure genius sanctified from  
blame,  
Till child and maiden pressed to thine  
embrace  
To kiss upon thy lips a stainless fame.

TO GEORGE SAND.

A RECOGNITION.

TRUE genius, but true woman, dost  
deny  
The woman's nature with a manly  
scorn,  
And break away the gauds and arm-  
lets worn  
By weaker women in captivity?  
Ah, vain denial! that revolted cry  
Is sobbed in by a woman's voice for-  
lorn.  
Thy woman's hair, my sister, all un-  
shorn,  
Floats back dishevelled strength in  
agony,  
Disproving thy man's name; and  
while before

The world thou burnest in a poet-fire,  
We see thy woman-heart beat ever-  
more  
Through the large flame. Beat purer,  
heart, and higher,  
Till God unsex thee on the heavenly  
shore  
Where unincarnate spirits purely as-  
pire!

THE PRISONER.

I COUNT the dismal time by months  
and years  
Since last I felt the greensward under  
foot,  
And the great breath of all things  
summer-mute  
Met mine upon my lips. Now earth  
appears  
As strange to me as dreams of distant  
spheres,  
Or thoughts of heaven we weep at.  
Nature's lute  
Sounds on, behind this door so closely  
shut,  
A strange, wild music to the prison-  
er's ears  
Dilated by the distance, till the brain  
Grows dim with fancies which it feels  
too fine,  
While ever, with a visionary pain,  
Past the precluded senses, sweep and  
shine  
Streams, forests, glades, and many a  
golden train  
Of sunlit hills transfigured to divine.

INSUFFICIENCY.

WHEN I attain to utter forth in verse  
Some inward thought, my soul throbs  
audibly  
Along my pulses, yearning to be free,  
And something farther, fuller, higher,  
rehearse.  
To the individual, true, and the uni-  
verse,  
In consummation of right harmony;  
But like a wind-exposed, distorted  
tree,  
We are blown against forever by the  
curse

Which breathes through nature. Oh,  
 the world is weak,  
 The effluence of each is false to all,  
 And what we best conceive we fail to  
 speak.  
 Wait, soul, until thine ashen gar-  
 ments fall,  
 And then resume thy broken strains,  
 and seek  
 Fit peroration without let or thrall.

---

TWO SKETCHES.

H. B.

I.

THE shadow of her face upon the wall  
 May take your memory to the perfect  
 Greek;  
 But when you front her, you would  
 call the cheek  
 Too full, sir, for your models, if, with-  
 al,  
 That bloom it wears could leave you  
 critical,  
 And that smile reaching toward the  
 rosy streak;  
 For one who smiles so has no need to  
 speak  
 To lead your thoughts along, as steed  
 to stall.  
 A smile that turns the sunny side o'  
 the heart  
 On all the world, as if herself did win  
 By what she lavished on an open  
 mart!  
 Let no man call the liberal sweetness  
 sin;  
 For friends may whisper as they stand  
 apart,  
 "Methinks there's still some warmer  
 place within."

A. B.

II.

HER azure eyes dark lashes hold in  
 fee;  
 Her fair superfluous ringlets without  
 cheek  
 Drop after one another down her  
 neck,  
 As many to each cheek as you might  
 see

Green leaves to a wild rose: this sign  
 outwardly,  
 And a like woman-covering seems to  
 deck  
 Her inner nature, for she will not  
 fleck  
 World's sunshine with a finger. Sym-  
 pathy  
 Must call her in love's name! and  
 then, I know,  
 She rises up, and brightens as she  
 should,  
 And lights her smile for comfort, and  
 is slow  
 In nothing of high-hearted fortitude.  
 To smell this flower, come near it:  
 such can grow  
 In that sole garden where Christ's  
 brow dropped blood.

---

MOUNTAINEER AND POET.

THE simple goatherd between Alp  
 and sky,  
 Seeing his shadow in that awful tryst  
 Dilated to a giant's on the mist,  
 Esteems not his own stature larger by  
 The apparent image, but more pa-  
 tiently  
 Strikes his staff down beneath his  
 clenching fist,  
 While the snow-mountains lift their  
 amethyst  
 And sapphire crowns of splendor, far  
 and nigh.  
 Into the air around him. Learn from  
 hence  
 Meek morals, all ye poets that pursue  
 Your way still onward up to emi-  
 nence:  
 Ye are not great because creation  
 drew  
 Large revelations round your earliest  
 sense,  
 Nor bright because God's glory shines  
 for you.

---

THE POET.

THE poet hath the child's sight in his  
 breast,  
 And sees all *new*. What oftenest he  
 has viewed,  
 He views with the first glory. Fair  
 and good  
 Pall never on him at the fairest, best,



But stand before him holy, and undressed  
 In week-day false conventions, such  
 as would  
 Drag other men down from the altitude  
 Of primal types, too early dispossessed.  
 Why, God would tire of all his heavens as soon  
 As thou, O godlike, childlike poet, didst  
 Of daily and nightly sights of sun and moon;  
 And therefore hath he set thee in the midst,  
 Where men may hear thy wonder's ceaseless tune,  
 And praise his world forever as thou bidst.

#### HIRAM POWERS' GREEK SLAVE.

THEY say ideal beauty cannot enter  
 The house of anguish. On the threshold stands  
 An alien Image with enshackled hands,  
 Called the Greek Slave! as if the artist meant her  
 (That passionless perfection which he lent her,  
 Shadowed, not darkened, where the sill expands)  
 To so confront man's crimes in different lands  
 With man's ideal sense. Pierce to the centre,  
 Art's fiery finger! and break up ere long  
 The serfdom of this world! appeal, fair stone,  
 From God's pure heights of beauty against man's wrong!  
 Catch up in thy divine face, not alone  
 East griefs, but west, and strike and shame the strong,  
 By thunders of white silence overthrown.

#### LIFE.

EACH creature holds an insular point  
 in space;  
 Yet what man stirs a finger, breathes  
 a sound,  
 But all the multitudinous beings  
 round  
 In all the countless worlds, with time  
 and place  
 For their conditions, down to the  
 central base,  
 Thrill, haply, in vibration and rebound.  
 Life answering life across the vast  
 profound,  
 In full antiphony, by a common  
 grace?  
 I think this sudden joyaunce which  
 illumes  
 A child's mouth sleeping, unawared  
 may run  
 From some soul newly loosened from  
 earth's tombs:  
 I think this passionate sigh, which,  
 half-begun,  
 I stifle back, may reach and stir the  
 plumes  
 Of God's calm angel standing in the  
 sun.

#### LOVE.

WE cannot live, except thus mutually  
 We alternate, aware or unaware,  
 The reflex act of life; and when we  
 bear  
 Our virtue outward most impulsively,  
 Most full of invocation, and to be  
 Most instantly compellant, certes  
 there  
 We live most life, whoever breathes  
 most air,  
 And counts his dying years by sun  
 and sea:  
 But when a soul by choice and conscience  
 doth  
 Throw out her full force on another  
 soul,  
 The conscience and the concentration  
 both  
 Make mere life, love. For Life in  
 perfect whole  
 And aim consummated is Love in  
 sooth,  
 As nature's magnet-heat rounds pole  
 with pole.

## HEAVEN AND EARTH.

"And there was silence in heaven for the space of half an hour."—*Revelation*.

GOD, who with thunders and great voices kept  
Beneath thy throne, and stars most silver-paced  
Along the inferior gyres, and open-faced  
Melodious angels round, canst intercept  
Music with music, yet at will hast swept  
All back, all back (said he in Patmos placed),  
To fill the heavens with silence of the waste  
Which lasted half an hour!—lo, I who have wept  
All day and night beseech thee by my tears,  
And by that dread response of curse and groan  
Men alternate across these hemispheres,  
Vouchsafe us such a half-hour's hush alone,  
In compensation for our stormy years:  
As heaven has paused from song, let earth from moan.

## THE PROSPECT.

METHINKS we do as fretful children do,  
Leaning their faces on the window-pane  
To sigh the glass dim with their own breath's stain,  
And shut the sky and landscape from their view;  
And thus, alas! since God the maker drew  
A mystic separation 'twixt those twain,—  
The life beyond us and our souls in pain,—  
We miss the prospect which we are called unto  
By grief we are fools to use. Be still and strong,  
O man, my brother! hold thy sobbing breath,

And keep thy soul's large window pure from wrong,  
That so, as life's appointment issueth,  
Thy vision may be clear to watch along  
The sunset consummation-lights of death.

HUGH STUART BOYD.<sup>1</sup>

## HIS BLINDNESS.

God would not let the spheric lights accost  
This God-loved man, and bade the earth stand off  
With all her beckoning hills whose golden stuff  
Under the feet of the royal sun is crosst.  
Yet such things were to him not wholly lost,—  
Permitted, with his wandering eyes light-proof,  
To catch fair visions rendered full enough  
By many a ministrant accomplished ghost,—  
Still seeing, to sounds of softly-turned book-leaves,  
Sappho's crown-rose, and Meleager's spring,  
And Gregory's starlight on Greek-burnished eyes,  
Till sensuous and affection seemed one thing,  
Viewed from one level,—earth's reapers at the sheaves  
Scarce plainer than heaven's angels on the wing.

<sup>1</sup> To whom was inscribed, in grateful affection, my poem of "Cyprus Wine." There comes a moment in life when even gratitude and affection turn to pain, as they do now with me. This excellent and learned man, enthusiastic for the good and the beautiful, and one of the most simple and upright of human beings, passed out of his long darkness through death, in the summer of 1848; Dr. Adam Clarke's daughter and biographer, Mrs. Smith (happier in this than the absent) fulfilling a doubly filial duty as she sat by the death-bed of her father's friend and hers.

## HUGH STUART BOYD.

## HIS DEATH, 1848.

BELOVÈD friend, who, living many  
 years  
 With sightless eyes raised vainly to  
 the sun,  
 Didst learn to keep thy patient soul  
 in tune  
 To visible Nature's elemental cheers,  
 God has not caught thee to new hemi-  
 spheres  
 Because thou wast aweary of this  
 one:  
 I think thine angel's patience first  
 was done,  
 And that he spake out with celestial  
 tears.  
 "Is it enough, dear God? then light-  
 en so  
 This soul that smiles in darkness!"  
 Steadfast friend,  
 Who never didst my heart or life  
 misknow,  
 Nor either's faults too keenly appreh-  
 end,  
 How can I wonder when I see thee  
 go  
 To join the dead found faithful to the  
 end?

## HUGH STUART BOYD.

## LEGACIES.

THREE gifts the dying left me, — Æs-  
 chylus,  
 And Gregory Nazianzen, and a clock  
 Chiming the gradual hours out like a  
 flock  
 Of stars whose motion is melodi-  
 ous.  
 The books were those I used to read  
 from, thus  
 Assisting my dear teacher's soul to  
 unlock  
 The darkness of his eyes: now, mine  
 they mock,  
 Blinded in turn by tears; now mur-  
 murous  
 Sad echoes of my young voice, years  
 agone  
 Entoning from these leaves the Gre-  
 cian phrase,  
 Return and choke my utterance.  
 Books, lie down  
 In silence on the shelf there, within  
 gaze;  
 And thou, clock, striking the hour's  
 pulses on,  
 Chime in the day which ends these  
 parting-days!

## THE LOST BOWER.

## I.

In the pleasant orchard-closes,  
 "God bless all our gains!" say  
 we;  
 But "May God bless all our losses!"  
 Better suits with our degree.  
 Listen, gentle, ay, and simple! listen,  
 children on the knee!

## II.

Green the land is where my daily  
 Steps in jocund childhood played,  
 Dimpled close with hill and val-  
 ley,  
 Dappled very close with shade;  
 Summer-snow of apple-blossoms run-  
 ning up from glade to glade.

## III.

There is one hill I see nearer  
 In my vision of the rest;  
 And a little wood seems clearer  
 As it climbeth from the west,  
 Sideway from the tree-locked valley,  
 to the airy upland crest.

## IV.

Small the wood is, green with  
 hazels,  
 And, completing the ascent,  
 Where the wind blows, and sun daz-  
 zles,  
 Thrills in leafy tremblement,  
 Like a heart, that, after climbing, beat-  
 eth quickly through content.

## V.

Not a step the wood advances  
 O'er the open hilltop's bound;  
 There, in green arrest, the branches  
 See their image on the ground:  
 You may walk beneath them smiling,  
 glad with sight, and glad with  
 sound.

## VI.

For you harken on your right hand  
 How the birds do leap and call  
 In the greenwood, out of sight, and  
 Out of reach and fear of all;  
 And the squirrels crack the filberts  
 through their cheerful madrigal.

## VII.

On your left, the sheep are cropping  
 The slant grass and daisies pale,  
 And five apple-trees stand dropping  
 Separate shadows toward the vale  
 Over which, in choral silence, the  
 hills look you their "All hail!"

## VIII.

Far out, kindled by each other,  
 Shining hills on hills arise,  
 Close as brother leans to brother  
 When they press beneath the eyes  
 Of some father praying blessings from  
 the gifts of paradise.

## IX.

While beyond, above them mount-  
 ed,  
 And above their woods also,  
 Malvern hills, for mountains count-  
 ed  
 Not unduly, loom a-row —  
 Keepers of Piers Plowman's visions  
 through the sunshine and the  
 snow.<sup>1</sup>

## X.

Yet in childhood little prized I  
 That fair walk and far survey:  
 'Twas a straight walk unadvised by  
 The least mischief worth a nay:  
 Up and down — as dull as grammar  
 on the eve of holiday.

<sup>1</sup> The Malvern Hills of Worcestershire are the scene of Langland's visions, and thus present the earliest classic ground of English poetry.

## XI.

But the wood, all close and clen-  
 ching  
 Bough in bough and root in root, —  
 No more sky (for over-branching)  
 At your head than at your foot, —  
 Oh, the wood drew me within it by a  
 glamour past dispute!

## XII.

Few and broken paths showed  
 through it,  
 Where the sheep had tried to  
 run,  
 Forced with snowy wool to strew it  
 Round the thickets, when anon  
 They, with silly thorn-pricked noses,  
 bleated back into the sun.

## XIII.

But my childish heart beat stronger  
 Than those thickets dared to grow:  
 I could pierce them! I could longer  
 Travel on, methought, than so:  
 Sheep for sheep-paths! braver chil-  
 dren climb and creep where  
 they would go.

## XIV.

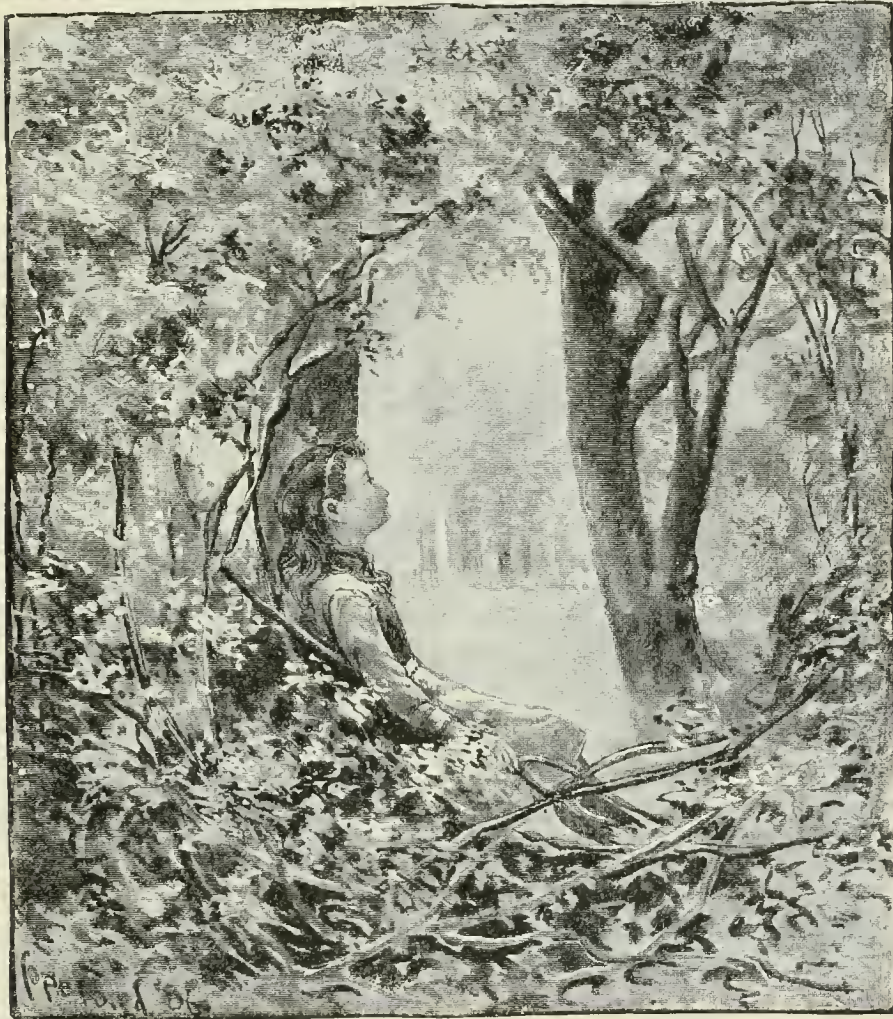
And the poets wander, said I,  
 Over places all as rude:  
 Bold Rinaldo's lovely lady  
 Sate to meet him in a wood:  
 Rosalinda, like a fountain, laughed out  
 pure with solitude.

## XV.

And, if Chancer had not travelled  
 Through a forest by a well,  
 He had never dreamt nor marvelled  
 At those ladies fair and fell  
 Who lived smiling without loving in  
 their island-citadel.

## XVI.

Thus I thought of the old singers,  
 And took courage from their song,  
 Till my little straggling fingers  
 Tore asunder gyve and thong  
 Of the brambles which entrapped me,  
 and the barrier branches strong



“ And five apple-trees stand dropping  
Separate shadows towards the vale.” — Page 368.

“ Shaping thence that bower of beauty which  
I sing of thus to you.” — Page 369.

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## XVII.

On a day, such pastime keeping,  
With a fawn's heart debonair,  
Under-crawling, overleaping  
Thorns that prick, and boughs that  
bear,  
I stood suddenly astonished: I was  
gladdened unaware.

## XVIII.

From the place I stood in, floated  
Back the covert dim and close,  
And the open ground was coated  
Carpet-smooth with grass and moss,  
And the bluebell's purple presence  
signed it worthily across.

## XIX.

Here a linden-tree stood, bright-  
ening  
All adown its silver rind;  
For as some trees draw the light-  
ening,  
So this tree, unto my mind,  
Drew to earth the blessed sunshine  
from the sky where it was  
shrined.

## XX.

Tall the linden-tree, and near it  
An old hawthorn also grew;  
And wood-ivy like a spirit  
Hovered dimly round the two,  
Shaping thence that bower of beauty  
which I sing of thus to you.

## XXI.

'Twas a bower for garden fitter  
Than for any woodland wide:  
Though a fresh and dewy glitter  
Struck it through from side to side,  
Shaped and shaven was the freshness,  
as by garden-cunning plied.

## XXII.

Oh! a lady might have come there,  
Hooded fairly like her hawk,  
With a book or lute in summer,  
And a hope of sweeter talk, —  
Listening less to her own music than  
for footsteps on the walk.

## XXIII.

But that bower appeared a marvel  
In the wildness of the place;  
With such seeming art and travail,

Finely fixed and fitted was  
Leaf to leaf, the dark-green ivy, to  
the summit from the base.

## XXIV.

And the ivy, veined and glossy,  
Was inwrought with eglantine;  
And the wild hop fibred closely;  
And the large-leaved columbine,  
Arch of door and window-mullion,  
did right sylvanly intwine.

## XXV.

Rose-trees either side the door were  
Growing lithe and growing tall,  
Each one set a summer warder  
For the keeping of the hall, —  
With a red rose and a white rose,  
leaning, nodding at the wall.

## XXVI.

As I entered, mosses hushing  
Stole all noises from my foot;  
And a green elastic cushion,  
Clasped within the linden's root,  
Took me in a chair of silence very  
rare and absolute.

## XXVII.

All the floor was paved with glory,  
Greenly, silently inlaid  
(Through quick motions made be-  
fore me)  
With fair counterparts in shade  
Of the fair serrated ivy-leaves which  
slanted overhead.

## XXVIII.

"Is such pavement in a palace?"  
So I questioned in my thought:  
The sun, shining through the chal-  
ice  
Of the red rose hung without,  
Threw within a red libation, like an  
answer to my doubt.

## XXIX.

At the same time, on the linen  
Of my childish lap there fell  
Two white may-leaves, downward  
winning  
Through the ceiling's miracle,  
From a blossom, like an angel, out of  
sight, yet blessing well.

XXX.

Down to floor, and up to ceiling  
Quick I turned my childish face.  
With an innocent appealing  
For the secret of the place  
To the trees, which surely knew it in  
partaking of the grace.

XXXI.

Where's no foot of human creature  
How could reach a human hand?  
And, if this be work of Nature,  
Why has Nature turned so bland,  
Breaking off from other wild-work?  
It was hard to understand.

XXXII.

Was she weary of rough-doing,  
Of the bramble and the thorn?  
Did she pause in tender rueing  
Here of all her sylvan scorn?  
Or in mock of art's deceiving was the  
sudden mildness worn?

XXXIII.

Or could this same bower (I fancied)  
Be the work of dryad strong,  
Who, surviving all that chanced  
In the world's old Pagan wrong,  
Lay hid, feeding in the woodland on  
the last true poet's song?

XXXIV.

Or was this the house of fairies,  
Left, because of the rough ways,  
Unsoiled by Ave Marys  
Which the passing pilgrim prays,  
And beyond St. Catherine's chiming  
on the blessed sabbath days?

XXXV.

So, young muser, I sate listening  
To my fancy's wildest word:  
On a sudden, through the glistening  
Leaves around, a little stirred,  
Came a sound, a sense of music, which  
was rather felt than heard.

XXXVI.

Softly, finely, it inwound me;  
From the world it shut me in,  
Like a fountain falling round me,  
Which with silver waters thin  
Clips a little water-Naiad sitting smil-  
ingly within.

XXXVII.

Whence the music came, who know-  
eth?  
I know nothing; but indeed  
Pan or Faunus never bloweth  
So much sweetness from a reed  
Which has sucked the milk of waters  
at the oldest riverhead.

XXXVIII.

Never lark the sun can waken  
With such sweetness, when the  
lark,  
The high planets overtaking  
In the half-*evanished* dark,  
Casts his singing to their singing, like  
an arrow to the mark.

XXXIX.

Never nightingale so singeth:  
Oh, she leans on thorny tree,  
And her poet-song she flingeth  
Over pain to victory!  
Yet she never sings such music — or  
she sings it not to me.

XL.

Never blackbirds, never thrushes,  
Nor small finches, sing as sweet,  
When the sun strikes through the  
bushes  
To their crimson clinging feet,  
And their pretty eyes look sideways  
to the summer heavens com-  
plete.

XLI.

If it *were* a bird, it seemèd  
Most like Chaucer's, which, in  
sooth,  
He of green and azure dreamèd,  
While it sate in spirit-ruth  
On that bier of a crowned lady, sing-  
ing nigh her silent mouth.

XLII.

If it *were* a bird? — ah, sceptic,  
Give me "yea" or give me  
"nay,"  
Though my soul were nympholep-  
tic  
As I heard that *virèlay*.  
You may stoop your pride to pardon,  
for my sin is far away!



## XLIII.

I rose up in exaltation  
And an inward trembling heat,  
And (it seemed) in gestic of passion  
Dropped the music to my feet  
Like a garment rustling downwards —  
such a silence followed it!

## XLIV.

Heart and head beat through the quiet  
Full and heavily, though slower:  
In the song, I think, and by it,  
Mystic Presences of power  
Had upsnatched me to the Timeless,  
then returned me to the Hour.

## XLV.

In a child-abstraction lifted,  
Straightway from the bower I past,  
Foot and soul being dimly drifted  
Through the greenwood, till at last  
In the hilltop's open sunshine I all  
consciously was cast.

## XLVI.

Face to face with the true moun-  
tains  
I stood silently and still,  
Drawing strength from fancy's  
dauntings,  
From the air about the hill,  
And from Nature's open mercies, and  
most debonair good-will.

## XLVII.

Oh the golden-hearted daisies  
Witnessed there, before my youth,  
To the truth of things, with praises  
Of the beauty of the truth;  
And I woke to Nature's real, laugh-  
ing joyfully for both.

## XLVIII.

And I said within me, laughing,  
I have found a bower to-day,  
A green lusus, fashioned half in  
Chance, and half in Nature's play,  
And a little bird sings nigh it, I will  
nevermore missay.

## XLIX.

Henceforth I will be the fairy  
Of this bower not built by one:  
I will go there, sad or merry,

With each morning's benison,  
And the bird shall be my harper in  
the dream-hall I have won.

## L.

So I said. But the next morning, —  
(Child, look up into my face, —  
'Ware, O sceptic, of your scorning!  
This is truth in its pure grace!)  
The next morning, all had vanished,  
or my wandering missed the  
place.

## LI.

Bring an oath most sylvan-holy,  
And upon it swear me true,  
By the wind-bells swinging slowly  
Their mute curfews in the dew,  
By the advent of the snowdrop, by  
the rosemary and rue, —

## LII.

I affirm by all or any,  
Let the cause be charm or chance,  
That my wandering searches many  
Missed the bower of my romance,  
That I nevermore upon it turned my  
mortal countenance.

## LIII.

I affirm, that, since I lost it,  
Never bower has seemed so fair,  
Never garden-creeper crossed it  
With so deft and brave an air,  
Never bird sung in the summer as I  
saw and heard them there.

## LIV.

Day by day, with new desire,  
Toward my wood I ran in faith,  
Under leaf and over brier,  
Through the thickets, out of breath,  
Like the prince who rescued Beauty  
from the sleep as long as death.

## LV.

But his sword of mettle clashèd,  
And his arm smote strong, I ween,  
And her dreaming spirit flashèd  
Through her body's fair white  
screen,  
And the light thereof might guide  
him up the cedar alleys green.

## LVI.

But for me I saw no splendor, —  
 All my sword was my child-heart;  
 And the wood refused surrender  
 Of that bower it held apart,  
 Safe as *Ædipus'* grave-place 'mid  
 Colone's olives swart.

## LVII.

As Aladdin sought the basements  
 His fair palace rose upon,  
 And the four and twenty casements  
 Which gave answers to the sun,  
 So, in wilderment of gazing, I looked  
 up, and I looked down.

## LVIII.

Years have vanished since, as  
 wholly  
 As the little bower did then;  
 And you call it tender folly  
 That such thoughts should come  
 again?  
 Ah, I cannot change this sighing for  
 your smiling, brother-men!

## LIX.

For this loss it did prefigure  
 Other loss of better good,  
 When my soul, in spirit-vigor  
 And in ripened womanhood,  
 Fell from visions of more beauty than  
 an arbor in a wood.

## LX.

I have lost, oh, many a pleasure,  
 Many a hope, and many a power,  
 Studious health and merry leisure,  
 The first dew on the first flower;  
 But the first of all my losses was the  
 losing of the bower.

## LXI.

I have lost the dream of Doing,  
 And the other dream of Done;  
 The first spring in the Pursuing,  
 The first pride in the Begun,  
 First recoil from incompletion in the  
 face of what is won;

## LXII.

Exaltations in the far light  
 Where some cottage only is;  
 Mild dejections in the starlight,  
 Which the sadder-hearted miss;  
 And the child-check blushing scarlet  
 for the very shame of bliss.

## LXIII.

I have lost the sound child-sleeping  
 Which the thunder could not break;  
 Something, too, of the strong leaping  
 Of the staglike heart awake,  
 Which the pale is low for keeping  
 in the road it ought to take.

## LXIV.

Some respect to social fictions  
 Has been also lost by me,  
 And some generous genuflexions,  
 Which my spirit offered free  
 To the pleasant old conventions of  
 our false humanity.

## LXV.

All my losses did I tell you,  
 Ye perchance would look away,  
 Ye would answer me, "Farewell,  
 you  
 Make sad company to-day,  
 And your tears are falling faster than  
 the bitter words you say."

## LXVI.

For God placed me like a dial  
 In the open ground with power,  
 And my heart had for its trial  
 All the sun and all the shower;  
 And I suffered many losses, — and  
 my first was of the bower.

## LXVII.

Laugh you? If that loss of mine be  
 Of no heavy-seeming weight, —  
 When the cone falls from the pine-  
 tree,  
 The young children laugh thereat;  
 Yet the wind that struck it riseth,  
 and the tempest shall be great.

## LXVIII.

One who knew me in my childhood,  
 In the glamour and the game,  
 Looking on me long and mild, would  
 Never know me for the same.  
 Come, unchanging recollections,  
 where those changes overcame!

## LXIX.

By this couch I weakly lie on  
 While I count my memories,  
 Through the fingers, which, still  
 sighing,  
 I press closely on mine eyes,  
 Clear as once beneath the sunshine,  
 I behold the bower arise.

## LXX.

Springs the linden-tree as greenly,  
 Stroked with light adown its rind,  
 And the ivy-leaves serenely  
 Each in either intertwined;  
 And the rose-trees at the doorway —  
 they have neither grown nor  
 pined.

## LXXI.

From those overblown faint roses  
 Not a leaf appeareth shed;  
 And that little bud discloses  
 Not a thorn's breadth more of red  
 For the winters and the summers  
 which have passed me overhead.

## LXXII.

And that music overfloweth,  
 Sudden sweet, the sylvan eaves;  
 Thrush, or nightingale, — who  
 knoweth?  
 Fay, or Faunus, — who believes?  
 But my heart still trembles in me to  
 the trembling of the leaves.

## LXXIII.

Is the bower lost then? who sayeth  
 That the bower indeed is lost?  
 Hark! my spirit in it prayeth  
 Through the sunshine and the frost;  
 And the prayer preserves it greenly  
 to the last and uttermost,

## LXXIV.

Till another open for me  
 In God's Eden-land unknown,  
 With an angel at the doorway,  
 White with gazing at his throne;  
 And a saint's voice in the palm-trees,  
 singing, "All is lost . . . and  
 won!"

## A SONG AGAINST SINGING.

TO E. J. H.

## I.

THEY bid me sing to thee,  
 Thou golden-haired and silver-voicèd  
 child,  
 With lips by no worse sigh than sleep's  
 defiled,

With eyes unknowing how tears dim  
 the sight,  
 And feet all trembling at the new de-  
 light  
 Treaders of earth to be.

## II.

Ah, no! the lark may bring  
 A song to thee from out the morning  
 cloud,  
 The merry river from its lilies bowed,  
 The brisk rain from the trees, the  
 lucky wind  
 That half doth make its music, half  
 doth find;  
 But *I* — I may not sing.

## III.

How could I think it right,  
 New-comer on our earth as, Sweet,  
 thou art,  
 To bring a verse from out an human  
 heart  
 Made heavy with accumulated tears,  
 And cross with such amount of weary  
 years  
 Thy day-sum of delight?

## IV.

Even if the verse were said,  
 Thou, who wouldst clasp thy tiny  
 hands to hear  
 The wind or rain, gay bird or river  
 clear,  
 Wouldst, at that sound of sad humani-  
 ties,  
 Upturn thy bright, uncomprehending  
 eyes,  
 And bid me play instead.

## V.

Therefore no song of mine,  
 But prayer in place of singing, —  
 prayer that would  
 Commend thee to the new-creating  
 God,  
 Whose gift is childhood's heart with-  
 out its stain  
 Of weakness, ignorance, and chan-  
 ging vain:  
 That gift of God be thine!

## VI.

So wilt thou aye be young,  
 In lovelier childhood than thy shining  
 brow  
 And pretty winning accents make  
 thee now;

Yea, sweeter than this scarce articu-  
late sound  
(How sweet !) of "father," "mother,"  
shall be found  
The ABBA on thy tongue.

## VII.

And so, as years shall chase  
Each other's shadows, thou wilt less  
resemble  
Thy fellows of the earth who toil and  
tremble,  
Than him thou seest not, — thine  
angel, bold  
Yet meek, whose ever-lifted eyes be-  
hold  
The Ever-loving's face.

---

WINE OF CYPRUS.

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GIVEN TO ME BY H. S. BOYD, AUTHOR OF  
"SELECT PASSAGES FROM THE GREEK  
FATHERS," ETC., TO WHOM THESE STAN-  
ZAS ARE ADDRESSED.

## I.

IF old Bacchus were the speaker,  
He would tell you, with a sigh,  
Of the Cyprus in this beaker  
I am sipping like a fly, —  
Like a fly or gnat on Ida  
At the hour of goblet-pledge,  
By queen Juno brushed aside, a  
Full white arm-sweep, from the  
edge.

## II.

Sooth, the drinking should be ampler  
When the drink is so divine,  
And some deep-mouthed Greek ex-  
emplar  
Would become your Cyprus wine:  
Cyclops' mouth might plunge aright  
in,  
While his one eye over-leered;  
Nor too large were mouth of Titan,  
Drinking rivers down his beard.

## III.

Pan might dip his head so deep in,  
That his ears alone pricked out;  
Fauns around him pressing, leaping,  
Each one pointing to his throat;

While the Naiads, like Bacchantes,  
Wild, with urns thrown out to  
waste,  
Cry, "O earth, that thou wouldst  
grant us  
Springs to keep, of such a taste!"

## IV.

But for me, I am not worthy  
After gods and Greeks to drink,  
And my lips are pale and earthy  
To go bathing from this brink:  
Since you heard them speak the last  
time,  
They have faded from their blooms,  
And the laughter of my pastime  
Has learnt silence at the tombs.

## V.

Ah, my friend! the antique drinkers  
Crowned the cup, and crowned the  
brow.  
Can I answer the old thinkers  
In the forms they thought of, now?  
Who will fetch from garden-closes  
Some new garlands while I speak,  
That the forehead, crowned with  
roses,  
May strike scarlet down the cheek?

## VI.

Do not mock me! with my mortal,  
Suits no wreath again, indeed:  
I am sad-voiced as the turtle  
Which Anacreon used to feed;  
Yet, as that same bird demurely  
Wet her beak in cup of his,  
So, without a garland, surely  
I may touch the brim of this.

## VII.

Go! let others praise the Chian;  
This is soft as Muse's string;  
This is tawny as Rhea's lion;  
This is rapid as his spring;  
Bright as Paphia's eyes e'er met us,  
Light as ever trod her feet;  
And the brown bees of Hymettus  
Make their honey not so sweet.

## VIII.

Very copious are my praises,  
Though I sip it like a fly.  
Ah! but, sipping, times and place  
Change before me suddenly.

As Ulysses' old libation  
Drew the ghosts from every part,  
So your Cyprus wine, dear Grecian,  
Stirs the Hades of my heart.

## IX.

And I think of those long mornings  
Which my thought goes far to seek,  
When, betwixt the folio's turnings,  
Solemn flowed the rhythmic Greek:  
Past the pane the mountain spreading,  
Swept the sheep-bell's tinkling  
noise,  
While a girlish voice was reading  
Somewhat low for *ais* and *ois*.

## X.

Then what golden hours were for us!  
While we sate together there;  
How the white vests of the chorus  
Seemed to wave up a live air!  
How the cothurns trod majestic  
Down the deep iambic lines,  
And the rolling anapestic  
Curled like vapor over shrines!

## XI.

Oh, our Æschylus, the thunderous!  
How he drove the bolted breath  
Through the cloud, to wedge it ponderous  
In the gnarled oak beneath!  
Oh, our Sophocles, the royal!  
Who was born to monarch's place,  
And who made the whole world loyal,  
Less by kingly power than grace.

## XII.

Our Euripides, the human,  
With his droppings of warm tears,  
And his touches of things common  
Till they rose to touch the spheres!  
Our Theocritus, our Bion,  
And our Pindar's shining goals! —  
These were cup-bearers undying,  
Of the wine that's meant for souls.

## XIII.

And my Plato, the divine one,  
If men know the gods aright  
By their motions as they shine on  
With a glorious trail of light!

And your noble Christian bishops,  
Who mouthed grandly the last  
Greek,  
Though the sponges on their hyssops  
Were distent with wine — too weak.

## XIV.

Yet your Chrysostom, you praised him  
As a liberal mouth of gold;  
And your Basil, you upraised him  
To the height of speakers old:  
And we both praised Heliodorus  
For his secret of pure lies, —  
Who forged first his linkèd stories  
In the heat of lady's eyes.

## XV.

And we both praised your Synesius  
For the fire shot up his odes,  
Though the Church was scarce propitious  
As he whistled dogs and gods.  
And we both praised Nazianzen  
For the fervid heart and speech;  
Only I eschewed his glancing  
At the lyre hung out of reach.

## XVI.

Do you mind that deed of Atè  
Which you bound me to so fast,  
Reading "De Virginitate,"  
From the first line to the last?  
How I said at ending, solemn,  
As I turned and looked at you,  
That St. Simeon on the column  
Had had somewhat less to do?

## XVII.

For we sometimes gently wrangled,  
Very gently, be it said,  
Since our thoughts were disentangled  
By no breaking of the thread;  
And I charged you with extortions  
On the nobler fames of old;  
Ay, and sometimes thought your Porsons  
Stained the purple they would fold.

## XVIII.

For the rest — a mystic moaning  
Kept Cassandra at the gate,  
With wild eyes the vision shone in,  
And wide nostrils scenting fate.  
And Prometheus, bound in passion  
By brute force to the blind stone,  
Showed us looks of invocation  
Turned to ocean and the sun.

## XIX.

And Medæa we saw burning  
 At her nature's planted stake;  
 And proud CEdipus fate-scorning  
 While the cloud came on to break —  
 While the cloud came on slow, slower,  
 Till he stood discrowned, resigned!  
 But the reader's voice dropped lower  
 When the poet called him BLIND.

## XX.

Ah, my gossip! you were older,  
 And more learned, and a man;  
 Yet that shadow, the infolder  
 Of your quiet eyelids, ran  
 Both our spirits to one level;  
 And I turned from hill and lea  
 And the summer-sun's green revel,  
 To your eyes that could not see.

## XXI.

Now Christ bless you with the one  
 light  
 Which goes shining night and day!  
 May the flowers which grow in sun-  
 light  
 Shed their fragrance in your way!  
 Is it not right to remember  
 All your kindness, friend of mine,  
 When we two sate in the chamber,  
 And the poets poured us wine?

## XXII.

So, to come back to the drinking  
 Of this Cyprus, — it is well;  
 But those memories, to my thinking  
 Make a better œnomet;  
 And, whoever be the speaker,  
 None can murmur with a sigh  
 That, in drinking from *that* beaker,  
 I am sipping like a fly.

## A RHAPSODY OF LIFE'S PROGRESS.

"Fill all the stops of life with tuneful breath."  
*Poems on Man, by Cornelius Matheus.*<sup>1</sup>

## 1

WE are borne into life: it is sweet, it  
 is strange.  
 We lie still on the knee of a mild  
 mystery

<sup>1</sup> A small volume, by an American poet, —  
 as remarkable in thought and manner for a

Which smiles with a change;  
 But we doubt not of changes, we  
 know not of spaces;  
 The heavens seem as near as our own  
 mother's face is,  
 And we think we could touch all the  
 stars that we see;  
 And the milk of our mother is white  
 on our mouth;  
 And with small childish hands we are  
 turning around  
 The apple of life which another has  
 found:  
 It is warm with our touch, not with  
 sun of the south,  
 And we count, as we turn it, the red  
 side for four.  
 O Life, O Beyond,  
 Thou art sweet, thou art strange  
 evermore!

## II.

Then all things look strange in the  
 pure golden ether;  
 We walk through the gardens with  
 hands linked together,  
 And the lilies look large as the  
 trees;  
 And as loud as the birds sing the  
 bloom-loving bees;  
 And the birds sing like angels, so  
 mystical-fine,  
 And the cedars are brushing the  
 archangels' feet,  
 And time is eternity, love is divine,  
 And the world is complete.  
 Now, God bless the child — father,  
 mother, respond!  
 O Life, O Beyond,  
 Thou art strange, thou art sweet!

## III.

Then we leap on the earth with the  
 armor of youth,  
 And the earth rings again;  
 And we breathe out, "O beauty!"  
 we cry out, "O truth!"  
 And the bloom of our lips drops with  
 wine,  
 And our blood runs amazed 'neath  
 the calm hyaline:  
 The earth cleaves to the foot, the sun  
 burns to the brain, —  
 What is this exultation? and what  
 this despair?  
 The strong pleasure is smiting the  
 nerves into pain,  
 vital sinewy vigor, as the right arm of Path-  
 finder. 1844.

And we drop from the fair as we  
 climb to the fair,  
 And we lie in a trance at its feet;  
 And the breath of an angel cold-  
 piercing the air  
 Breathes fresh on our faces in  
 swoon,  
 And we think him so near, he is this  
 side the sun,  
 And we wake to a whisper self-mur-  
 mured and fond,  
 O Life, O Beyond,  
 Thou art strange, thou art sweet !

## IV.

And the winds and the waters in pas-  
 toral measures  
 Go winding around us, with roll up-  
 on roll,  
 Till the soul lies within in a circle of  
 pleasures  
 Which hideth the soul;  
 And we run with the stag, and we  
 leap with the horse,  
 And we swim with the fish through  
 the broad water-course,  
 And we strike with the falcon, and  
 hunt with the hound,  
 And the joy which is in us flies out  
 by a wound.  
 And we shout so aloud, "We exult,  
 we rejoice,"  
 That we lose the low moan of our  
 brothers around;  
 And we shout so adeep down crea-  
 tion's profound,  
 We are deaf to God's voice.  
 And we bind the rose-garland on  
 forehead and ears,  
 Yet we are not ashamed;  
 And the dew of the roses that run-  
 neth unblamed  
 Down our cheeks is not taken for  
 tears.  
 Help us, God ! trust us, man ! love us,  
 woman ! "I hold  
 Thy small head in my hands, — with  
 its grapelets of gold  
 Growing bright through my fingers,  
 — like altar for oath,  
 'Neath the vast golden spaces like  
 witnessing faces  
 That watch the eternity strong in the  
 troth —  
 I love thee, I leave thee,  
 Live for thee, die for thee !  
 I prove thee, deceive thee,  
 Undo evermore thee !

Help me, God ! slay me, man ! — one  
 is mourning for both."  
 And we stand up, though young, near  
 the funeral-sheet  
 Which covers old Cæsar and old  
 Pharamond;  
 And death is so nigh us, life cools  
 from its heat.  
 O Life, O Beyond,  
 Art thou fair, art thou sweet ?

## V.

Then we act to a purpose, we spring  
 up erect;  
 We will tame the wild mouths of the  
 wilderness-steeds;  
 We will plough up the deep in the  
 ships double-decked;  
 We will build the great cities, and do  
 the great deeds,  
 Strike the steel upon steel, strike the  
 soul upon soul,  
 Strike the dole on the weal, overcom-  
 ing the dole.  
 Let the cloud meet the cloud in a  
 grand thunder-roll !  
 "While the eagle of thought rides the  
 tempest in scorn,  
 Who cares if the lightning is burning  
 the corn ?  
 Let us sit on the thrones  
 In a purple sublimity,  
 And grind down men's bones  
 To pale unanimity.  
 Speed me, God ! serve me, man ! I am  
 god over men;  
 When I speak in my cloud, none  
 shall answer again:  
 'Neath the stripe and the bond,  
 Lie and mourn at my feet !"  
 O Life, O Beyond,  
 Thou art strange, thou art  
 sweet !

## VI.

Then we grow into thought, and with  
 inward ascensions  
 Touch the bounds of our being.  
 We lie in the dark here, swathed  
 doubly around  
 With our sensual relations and social  
 conventions,  
 Yet are 'ware of a sight, yet are 'ware  
 of a sound  
 Beyond hearing and seeing;  
 Are aware that a Hades rolls deep on  
 all sides  
 With its infinite tides

About and above us, until the strong arch  
 Of our life creaks and bends as if ready for falling,  
 And through the dim rolling we hear the sweet calling  
 Of spirits that speak in a soft undertongue  
 The sense of the mystical march.  
 And we cry to them softly, "Come nearer, come nearer,  
 And lift up the lap of this dark, and speak clearer,  
 And teach us the song that ye sung!"  
 And we smile in our thought as they answer or no;  
 For to dream of a sweetness is sweet as to know.  
 Wonders breathe in our face,  
 And we ask not their name;  
 Love takes all the blame  
 Of the world's prison-place;  
 And we sing back the songs as we guess them, aloud;  
 And we send up the lark of our music that cuts  
 Untired through the cloud,  
 To beat with its wings at the lattice heaven shuts:  
 Yet the angels look down, and the mortals look up,  
 As the little wings beat;  
 And the poet is blessed with their pity or hope.  
 'Twixt the heavens and the earth can a poet despond?  
 O Life, O Beyond,  
 Thou art strange, thou art sweet!

## vii.

Then we wring from our souls their applicative strength,  
 And bend to the cord the strong bow of our ken,  
 And, bringing our lives to the level of others,  
 Hold the cup we have filled to their uses at length.  
 "Help me, God! love me, man! I am man among men,  
 And my life is a pledge  
 Of the ease of another's!"  
 the fire and the water we drive out the steam  
 With a rush and a roar and the speed of a dream;

And the car without horses, the car without wings,  
 Roars onward, and flies  
 On its gray iron edge  
 'Neath the heat of a thought sitting still in our eyes:  
 And our hand knots in air, with the bridge that it flings,  
 Two peaks far disrupted by ocean and skies,  
 And, lifting a fold of the smooth-flowing Thames,  
 Draws under the world with its turmoils and pothers,  
 While the swans float on softly, untouched in their calms  
 By humanity's hum at the root of the springs.  
 And with reachings of thought we reach down to the deeps  
 Of the souls of our brothers,  
 We teach them full words with our slow-moving lips,  
 "God," "Liberty," "Truth," — which they hearken and think,  
 And work into harmony, link upon link,  
 Till the silver meets round the earth gelid and dense,  
 Shedding sparks of electric responding intense  
 On the dark of eclipse.  
 Then we hear through the silence and glory afar,  
 As from shores of a star  
 In aphelion, the new generations that cry  
 Disinthrilled by our voice to harmonious reply,  
 "God," "Liberty," "Truth!"  
 We are glorious forsooth,  
 And our name has a seat,  
 Though the shroud should be donned.  
 O Life, O Beyond,  
 Thou art strange, thou art sweet!

## viii.

Help me, God! help me, man! I am low, I am weak;  
 Death loosens my sinews, and creeps in my veins;  
 My body is cleft by these wedges of pains  
 From my spirit's serene,  
 And I feel the externe and insensate creep in  
 On my organized clay;  
 I sob not, nor shriek,  
 Yet I faint fast away:



I am strong in the spirit, deep-  
 thoughted, clear-eyed;  
 I could walk, step for step, with an  
 angel beside,  
 On the heaven-heights of truth.  
 Oh, the soul keeps its youth;  
 But the body faints sore, it is tried  
 in the race,  
 It sinks from the chariot ere reach-  
 ing the goal,  
 It is weak, it is cold,  
 The rein drops from its hold,  
 It sinks back with the death in its  
 face.  
 On, chariot! on, soul!  
 Ye are all the more fleet:  
 Be alone at the goal  
 Of the strange and the sweet!

## IX.

Love us, God! love us man! we be-  
 lieve, we achieve!  
 Let us love, let us live:  
 For the acts correspond;  
 We are glorious, and DIE;  
 And again on the knee of a mild mys-  
 tery  
 That smiles with a change,  
 Here we lie.  
 O DEATH, O BEYOND,  
 Thou art sweet, thou art strange!

A LAY OF THE EARLY  
ROSE.

—“Discordance that can accord.”  
 ROMAUNT OF THE ROSE.

A ROSE once grew within  
 A garden April-green,  
 In her loneliness, in her loneliness,  
 And the fairer for that oneness.

A white rose delicate  
 On a tall bough and straight:  
 Early-comer, early-comer,  
 Never waiting for the summer.

Her pretty gesses did win  
 South winds to let her in,  
 In her loneliness, in her loneliness,  
 All the fairer for that oneness.

“For if I wait,” said she,  
 “Till time for roses be,  
 For the moss-rose and the musk-rose,  
 Maiden-blush and royal-dusk rose,

“What glory, then, for me  
 In such a company?  
 Roses plenty, roses plenty,  
 And one nightingale for twenty!

“Nay, let me in,” said she,  
 “Before the rest are free,  
 In my loneliness, in my loneliness,  
 All the fairer for that oneness.

“For I would lonely stand,  
 Uplifting my white hand,  
 On a mission, on a mission,  
 To declare the coming vision.

“Upon which lifted sign  
 What worship will be mine!  
 What addressing, what caressing,  
 And what thanks and praise and  
 blessing!

“A windlike joy will rush  
 Through every tree and bush,  
 Bending softly in affection  
 And spontaneous benediction.

“Insects, that only may  
 Live in a sunbright ray,  
 To my whiteness, to my whiteness,  
 Shall be drawn as to a brightness,

“And every moth and bee  
 Approach me reverently,  
 Wheeling o’er me, wheeling o’er me,  
 Coronals of motioned glory.

“Three larks shall leave a cloud,  
 To my whiter beauty vowed,  
 Singing gladly all the moontide,  
 Never waiting for the suntide.

“Ten nightingales shall flee  
 Their woods for love of me,  
 Singing sadly all the suntide,  
 Never waiting for the moontide.

“I ween the very skies  
 Will look down with surprise,  
 When below on earth they see me  
 With my starry aspect dreamy.

“And earth will call her flowers  
 To hasten out of doors,

By their courtesies and sweet-smell-  
ing,  
To give grace to my foretelling."

So praying, did she win  
South winds to let her in,  
In her lonesness, in her lonesness,  
And the fairer for that oneness.

But ah, alas for her !  
No thing did minister  
To her praises, to her praises,  
More than might unto a daisy's.

No tree nor bush was seen  
To boast a perfect green,  
Scarcely having, scarcely having,  
One leaf broad enough for waving.

The little flies did crawl  
Along the southern wall,  
Faintly shifting, faintly shifting,  
Wings scarce long enough for lifting.

The lark, too high or low,  
I ween, did miss her so,  
With his nest down in the gorses,  
And his song in the star-courses.

The nightingale did please  
To loiter beyond seas;  
Guess him in the Happy islands,  
Learning music from the silence.

Only the bee, forsooth,  
Came in the place of both,  
Doing honor, doing honor,  
To the honey-dews upon her.

The skies looked coldly down  
As on a royal crown;  
Then, with drop for drop, at leisure,  
They began to rain for pleasure.

Whereat the earth did seem  
To waken from a dream,  
Winter-frozen, winter-frozen,  
Her unquiet eyes unclosing, —

Said to the Rose, "Ha, snow !  
And art thou fallen so ? —  
Thou, who wast enthroned stately  
All along my mountains lately ?

"Holla, thou world-wide snow !  
And art thou wasted so,  
With a little bough to catch thee,  
And a little bee to watch thee ?"

— Poor Rose, to be misknown !  
Would she had ne'er been blown,  
In her lonesness, in her lonesness,  
All the sadder for that oneness.

Some word she tried to say,  
Some *no . . . ah, well-away !*  
But the passion did o'ercome her,  
And the fair, frail leaves dropped from  
her,

— Dropped from her, fair and mute,  
Close to a poet's foot,  
Who beheld them, smiling slowly,  
As at something sad, yet holy, —

Said, "Verily, and thus  
It chances too with *us*  
Poets, singing sweetest snatches,  
While that deaf men keep the  
watches;

"Vaunting to come before  
Our own age evermore,  
In a lonesness, in a lonesness,  
And the nobler for that oneness.

"Holy in voice and heart,  
To high ends set apart:  
All unmated, all unmated,  
Just because so consecrated.

"But if alone we be,  
Where is our empery ?  
And, if none can reach our stature,  
Who can mete our lofty nature ?

"What bell will yield a tone,  
Swung in the air alone ?  
If no brazen clapper bringing,  
Who can hear the chimed ringing ?

"What angel but would seem  
To sensual eyes ghost-dim ?  
And, without assimilation,  
Vain is interpenetration.

"And thus, what can we do,  
Poor rose and poet too,  
Who both antedate our mission  
In an unprepared season ?

"Drop, leaf ! be silent, song !  
Cold things we come among:  
We must warm them, we must warm  
them,  
Ere we ever hope to charm them."

"Howbeit" (here his face  
Lightened around the place,  
So to mark the outward turning  
Of its spirit's inward burning)

"Something it is, to hold  
In God's worlds manifold,  
First revealed to creature-duty,  
Some new form of his mild beauty

"Whether that form respect  
The sense or intellect,  
Holy be, in mood or meadow,  
The chief beauty's sign and shadow!

"Holy in me and thee,  
Rose fallen from the tree,  
Though the world stand dumb around  
us,  
All unable to expound us

"Though none us deign to bless,  
Blessèd are we, nathless;  
Blessèd still and consecrated  
In that, rose, we were created.

"Oh, shame to poet's lays  
Sung for the dole of praise, —  
Hoarsely sung upon the highway,  
With that *obolum da mihi!*

"Shame, shame, to poet's soul,  
Pining for such a dole,  
When heaven-chosen to inherit  
The high throne of a chief spirit!

"Sit still upon your thrones.  
O ye poetic ones!  
And if, sooth, the world deery you,  
Let it pass unchallenged by you.

"Ye to yourselves suffice,  
Without its flatteries.  
Self-contentedly approve you  
Unto HIM who sits above you, —

"In prayers that upward mount  
Like to a fair-sunned fount,  
Which, in gushing back upon you,  
Hath an upper music won you, —

"In faith, that still perceives  
No rose can shed her leaves,  
Far less, poet fall from mission,  
With an unfulfilled fruition, —

"In hope, that apprehends  
An end beyond these ends,

And great uses rendered duly  
By the meanest song sung truly, —

"In thanks, for all the good  
By poets understood,  
For the sound of seraphs moving  
Down the hidden depths of loving, —

"For sights of things away  
Through fissures of the clay,  
Promised things which *shall* be given  
And sung over up in heaven, —

"For life so lovely vain,  
For death, which breaks the chain,  
For this sense of present sweetness,  
And this yearning to completeness!"

## THE POET AND THE BIRD.

A FABLE.

### I.

SAID a people to a poet, "Go out  
from among us straightway!  
While we are thinking earthly  
things, thou singest of divine:  
There's a little fair brown nightin-  
gale who, sitting in the gateway,  
Makes fitter music to our ear than  
any song of thine!"

### II.

The poet went out weeping; the  
nightingale ceased chanting:  
"Now wherefore, O thou nightin-  
gale, is all thy sweetness  
done?"  
—"I cannot sing my earthly things,  
the heavenly poet wanting,  
Whose highest harmony includes  
the lowest under sun."

### III.

The poet went out weeping, and died  
abroad, bereft there;  
The bird flew to his grave, and died  
amid a thousand wails:  
And when I last came by the place, I  
swear the music left there  
Was only of the poet's song, and  
not the nightingale's.

## THE CRY OF THE HUMAN.

## I.

"THERE is no God," the foolish saith,  
But none, "There is no sorrow:"  
And Nature oft the cry of faith  
In bitter need will borrow.  
Eyes which the preacher could not  
school  
By wayside graves are raised;  
And lips say, "God be pitiful,"  
Who ne'er said, "God be praised."  
Be pitiful, O God!

## II.

The tempest stretches from the steep  
The shadow of its coming;  
The beasts grow tame, and near us  
creep,  
As help were in the human:  
Yet, while the cloud-wheels roll and  
grind,  
We spirits tremble under—  
The hills have echoes; but we find  
No answer for the thunder.  
Be pitiful, O God!

## III.

The battle hurtles on the plains,  
Earth feels new scythes upon her;  
We reap our brothers for the wains,  
And call the harvest—honor:  
Draw face to face, front line to line,  
One image all inherit,  
Then kill, curse on, by that same sign,  
Clay—clay, and spirit—spirit.  
Be pitiful, O God!

## IV.

The plague runs festering through the  
town,  
And never a bell is tolling,  
And corpses, jostled 'neath the moon,  
Nod to the dead-cart's rolling;  
The young child calleth for the cup,  
The strong man brings it weeping;  
The mother from her babe looks up,  
And shrieks away its sleeping.  
Be pitiful, O God!

## V.

The plague of gold strikes far and  
near,  
And deep and strong it enters;  
This purple chimar which we wear,  
Makes madder than the centaur's:  
Our thoughts grow blank, our words  
grow strange,  
We cheer the pale gold-diggers,  
Each soul is worth so much on  
'Change,  
And marked, like sheep, with fig-  
ures.  
Be pitiful, O God!

## VI.

The curse of gold upon the land  
The lack of bread enforces;  
The rail-cars snort from strand to  
strand.  
Like more of death's white horses;  
The rich preach "rights" and "future  
days,"  
And hear no angel scoffing;  
The poor die mute, with starving gaze  
On corn-ships in the offing.  
Be pitiful, O God!

## VII.

We meet together at the feast,  
To private mirth betake us;  
We stare down in the winecup, lest  
Some vacant chair should shake us;  
We name delight, and pledge it  
round—  
"It shall be ours to-morrow!"  
God's seraphs, do your voices sound  
As sad in naming sorrow?  
Be pitiful, O God!

## VIII.

We sit together, with the skies,  
The steadfast skies, above us.  
We look into each other's eyes,  
"And how long will you love us?"  
The eyes grow dim with prophecy,  
The voices, low and breathless,—  
"Till death us part!" O words, to be  
Our best, for love the deathless!  
Be pitiful, O God!

## IX.

We tremble by the harmless bed  
Of one loved and departed;  
Our tears drop on the lips that said  
Last night, "Be stronger-hearted!"

O God, to clasp those fingers close,  
And yet to feel so lonely!  
To see a light upon such brows,  
Which is the daylight only!  
Be pitiful, O God!

## x.

The happy children come to us,  
And look up in our faces;  
They ask us, "Was it thus, and thus,  
When we were in their places?"  
We cannot speak; we see anew  
The hills we used to live in,  
And feel our mother's smile press  
through  
The kisses she is giving.  
Be pitiful, O God!

## xi.

We pray together at the kirk  
For mercy, mercy solely:  
Hands weary with the evil work,  
We lift them to the Holy.  
The corpse is calm below our knee,  
Its spirit bright before Thee:  
Between them, worse than either, we,  
Without the rest or glory.  
Be pitiful, O God!

## xii.

We leave the communing of men,  
The murmur of the passions,  
And live alone, to live again  
With endless generations:  
Are we so brave? The sea and sky  
In silence lift their mirrors,  
And, glassed therein, our spirits high  
Recoil from their own terrors.  
Be pitiful, O God!

## xiii.

We sit on hills our childhood wist,  
Woods, hamlets, streams, behold-  
ing:  
The sun strikes through the farthest  
mist  
The city's spire to golden:  
The city's golden spire it was  
When hope and health were strong-  
est;  
But now it is the churchyard grass  
We look upon the longest.  
Be pitiful, O God!

## xiv.

And soon all vision waxeth dull;  
Men whisper, "He is dying:"  
We cry no more, "Be pitiful!"  
We have no strength for crying—  
No strength, no need. Then, soul of  
mine,  
Look up, and triumph rather:  
Lo, in the depth of God's divine  
The Son adjures the Father,  
BE PITIFUL, O GOD!

## A PORTRAIT.

"One name is Elizabeth."—BEN JONSON.

I WILL paint her as I see her.  
Ten times have the lilies blown  
Since she looked upon the sun.

And her face is lily-clear,  
Lily-shaped, and dropped in duty  
To the law of its own beauty.

Oval cheeks encolored faintly,  
Which a trail of golden hair  
Keeps from fading off to air;

And a forehead fair and saintly,  
Which two blue eyes undershine,  
Like meek prayers before a shrine.

Face and figure of a child,  
Though too calm, you think, and  
tender,  
For the childhood you would lend  
her.

Yet child-simple, undefiled,  
Frank, obedient, waiting still  
On the turnings of your will.

Moving light, as all young things,—  
As young birds, or early wheat  
When the wind blows over it.

Only, free from flutterings  
Of loud mirth that scorneth meas-  
ure,  
Taking love for her chief pleasure.

Choosing pleasures for the rest,  
Which come softly, just as she  
When she nestles at your knee.

Quiet talk she liketh best,  
In a bower of gentle looks,  
Watering flowers, or reading books.

And her voice, it murmurs lowly,  
As a silver stream may run,  
Which yet feels, you feel, the sun.

And her smile, it seems half holy,  
As if drawn from thoughts more far  
Than our common jestings are.

And, if any poet knew her,  
He would sing of her with falls  
Used in lovely madrigals.

And, if any painter drew her,  
He would paint her unaware  
With a halo round the hair.

And, if reader read the poem,  
He would whisper, "You have  
done a  
Consecrated little Una."

And a dreamer (did you show him  
That same picture) would exclaim,  
"'Tis my angel, with a name!"

And a stranger, when he sees her  
In the street even, smileth stilly,  
Just as you would at a lily.

And all voices that address her  
Softens, sleekens every word,  
As if speaking to a bird.

And all fancies yearn to cover  
The hard earth whereon she passes,  
With the thymy-scented grasses.

And all hearts do pray, "God love  
her!"  
Ay, and always, in good sooth,  
We may all be sure HE DOETH.

## CONFESSIONS.

### I.

FACE to face in my chamber, my  
silent chamber, I saw her:  
God and she and I only, there I sate  
down to draw her  
Soul through the clefts of confession,  
"Speak, I am holding thee fast,  
As the angel of resurrection shall do  
it at the last!"  
"My cup is blood-red  
With my sin," she said,  
"And I pour it out to the bitter lees,  
As if the angels of judgment stood  
over me strong at the last,  
Or as thou wert as these."

### II.

When God smote his hands together,  
and struck out thysoul as a spark  
Into the organized glory of things,  
from deeps of the dark,  
Say, didst thou shine, didst thou  
burn, didst thou honor the  
power in the form,  
As the star does at night, or the fire-  
fly, or even the little ground-  
worm?  
"I have sinned," she said,  
"For my seed-light shed  
Has smouldered away from His first  
decrees.  
The cypress praiseth the firefly, the  
ground-leaf praiseth the worm:  
I am viler than these."

### III.

When God on that sin had pity, and  
did not trample thee straight  
With his wild rains beating and  
drenching thy light found inad-  
equate;  
When he only sent thee the north  
wind, a little searching and  
chill,  
To quicken thy flame,—didst thou  
kindle and flash to the heights  
of his will?  
"I have sinned," she said,  
"Unquickened, unspread,  
My fire dropt down, and I wept ou  
my knees:  
I only said of his winds of the north  
as I shrank from their chill,  
What delight is in these?"



“ And if any painter drew her,  
He would paint her unaware  
With a halo round the hair.” — Page 384.





IV.

When God on that sin had pity, and  
 did not meet it as such.  
 But tempered the wind to thy uses,  
 and softened the world to thy  
 touch,  
 At least thou wast moved in thy soul,  
 though, unable to prove it afar,  
 Thou couldst carry thy light like a  
 jewel, not giving it out like a  
 star?  
 "I have sinned," she said,  
 "And not merited  
 The gift he gives, by the grace he  
 sees!  
 The mine-cave praiseth the jewel,  
 the hillside praiseth the star:  
 I am viler than these."

V.

Then I cried aloud in my passion,  
 Unthankful and impotent crea-  
 ture,  
 To throw up thy scorn unto God  
 through the rents in thy beg-  
 garly nature!  
 If he, the All-giving and Loving, is  
 served so unduly, what then  
 Hast thou done to the weak and the  
 false and the changing, — thy  
 fellows of men?  
 "I have *loved*," she said,  
 (Words bowing her head  
 As the wind the wet acacia-trees)  
 "I saw God sitting above me, but I  
 . . . I sate among men,  
 And I have loved these."

VI.

Again with a lifted voice, like a  
 choral trumpet, that takes  
 The lowest note of a viol that trem-  
 bles, and triumphing breaks  
 On the air with it solemn and clear,  
 "Behold! I have sinned not in  
 this!  
 Where I loved, I have loved much  
 and well: I have verily loved  
 not amiss.  
 Let the living," she said,  
 "Inquire of the dead,  
 In the house of the pale-fronted  
 images:  
 My own true dead will answer for  
 me, that I have not loved amiss  
 In my love for all these."

VII.

"The least touch of their hands in  
 the morning, I keep it by day  
 and by night;  
 Their least step on the stair, at the  
 door, still throbs through me,  
 if ever so light;  
 Their least gift which they left to  
 my childhood, far off in the  
 long-ago years,  
 Is now turned from a toy to a relic,  
 and seen through the crystals  
 of tears.  
 Dig the snow," she said,  
 "For my churchyard bed:  
 Yet I, as I sleep, shall not fear to  
 freeze,  
 If one only of these my beloveds  
 shall love me with heart-warm  
 tears,  
 As I have loved these!"

VIII.

"If I angered any among them, from  
 thenceforth my own life was  
 sore;  
 If I fell by chance from their pres-  
 ence, I clung to their memory  
 more:  
 Their tender I often felt holy, their  
 bitter I sometimes called sweet;  
 And, whenever their heart has refused  
 me, I fell down straight at their  
 feet.  
 I have loved," she said:  
 "Man is weak, God is dread;  
 Yet the weak man dies with his  
 spirit at ease,  
 Having poured such an unguent of  
 love but once on the Saviour's  
 feet,  
 As I lavished for these."

IX.

Go, I cried: thou hast chosen the hu-  
 man, and left the divine!  
 Then, at least, have the human shared  
 with thee their wild berry-wine?  
 Have they loved back thy love, and,  
 when strangers approached  
 thee with blame,  
 Have they covered thy fault with  
 their kisses, and loved thee the  
 same?  
 But she shrunk and said,  
 "God over my head"

Must sweep in the wrath of his  
judgment-seas,  
If *He* shall deal with me sinning but  
only indeed the same,  
And no gentler than these."

## LOVED ONCE.

### I.

I CLASSED, appraising once,  
Earth's lamentable sounds, — the  
well-aday,  
The jarring yea and nay,  
The fall of kisses on unanswering  
clay,  
The sobbed farewell, the welcome  
mournfuller;  
But all did leaven the air  
With a less bitter leaven of sure de-  
spair  
Than these words, "I loved ONCE."

### II.

And who saith "I loved ONCE"?  
Not angels, whose clear eyes, love,  
love, foresee,  
Love, through eternity,  
And by To Love do apprehend To Be.  
Not God, called LOVE, his noble  
crown-name casting  
A light too broad for blasting:  
The great God changing not from  
everlasting,  
Saith never, "I loved ONCE."

### III.

Oh, never is "Loved ONCE"  
Thy word, thou Victim-Christ, mis-  
prized friend!  
Thy cross and curse may rend,  
But, having loved, thou lovest to the  
end.  
This is man's saying, — man's: too  
weak to move  
One spherèd star above,  
Man desecrates the eternal God-word  
Love  
By his No More and Once.

### IV.

How say ye, "We loved once,"  
Blasphemers? Is your earth not cold  
enow,  
Mourners, without that snow?  
Ah, friends, and would ye wrong  
each other so?  
And could ye say of some whose  
love is known,  
Whose prayers have met your own,  
Whose tears have fallen for you,  
whose smiles have shone  
So long, "We loved them ONCE"?

### V.

Could ye, "We loved her once,"  
Say calm of me, sweet friends, when  
out of sight?  
When hearts of better right  
Stand in between me and your happy  
light?  
Or when, as flowers kept too long in  
the shade,  
Ye find my colors fade,  
And all that is not love in me de-  
cayed?  
Such words, — Ye loved me ONCE!

### VI.

Could ye, "We loved her once,"  
Say cold of me when further put  
away  
In earth's sepulchral clay,  
When mute the lips which deprecate  
to-day?  
Not so! not then — least then! When  
life is shriven,  
And death's full joy is given,  
Of those who sit and love you up in  
heaven,  
Say no! "We loved them once."

### VII.

Say never, ye loved ONCE:  
God is too near above, the grave, be-  
neath,  
And all our moments breathe  
Too quick in mysteries of life and  
death  
For such a word. The eternities  
avenge  
Affection's light of range.  
There comes no change to justify  
that change,  
Whatever comes, — Loved ONCE!

## VIII.

And yet that same word ONCE  
Is humanly acceptive. Kings have  
said,  
Shaking a disrowned head,  
"We ruled once,"—dotards, "We  
once taught and led;"  
Cripples once danced i' the vines;  
and bards approved  
Were once by scornings moved:  
But love strikes one hour—LOVE!  
those *never* loved  
Who dream that they loved ONCE.

## THE HOUSE OF CLOUDS.

## I.

I WOULD build a cloudy house  
For my thoughts to live in  
When for earth too fancy-loose,  
And too low for heaven.  
Hush! I talk my dream aloud.  
I build it bright to see;  
I build it on the moonlit cloud  
To which I looked with *thee*.

## II.

Cloud-walls of the morning's gray,  
Faced with amber column,  
Crowned with crimson cupola  
From a sunset solemn:  
May-mists for the casements fetch,  
Pale and glimmering,  
With a sunbeam hid in each,  
And a smell of spring.

## III.

Build the entrance high and proud,  
Darkening, and then brightening,  
Of a riven thunder-cloud,  
Veinèd by the lightning;  
Use one with an iris-stain  
For the door so thin,  
Turning to a sound like rain  
As I enter in.

## IV.

Build a spacious hall thereby  
Boldly, never fearing;  
Use the blue place of the sky  
Which the wind is clearing:

Branched with corridors sublime,  
Flecked with winding stairs,  
Such as children wish to climb  
Following their own prayers.

## V.

In the mutest of the house  
I will have my chamber;  
Silence at the door shall use  
Evening's light of amber,  
Solemnizing every mood,  
Softening in degree,  
Turning sadness into good  
As I turn the key.

## VI.

Be my chamber tapestried  
With the showers of summer,  
Close, but soundless, glorified  
When the sunbeams come here  
Wandering harpers, harping on  
Waters stringed for such,  
Drawing color for a tune,  
With a vibrant touch.

## VII.

Bring a shadow green and still  
From the chestnut-forest;  
Bring a purple from the hill  
When the heat is sorest;  
Spread them out from wall to wall,  
Carpet-wove around,  
Whereupon the foot shall fall  
In light instead of sound.

## VIII.

Bring fantastic cloudlets home  
From the noontide zenith,  
Ranged for sculptures round the room,  
Named as Fancy weeneth;  
Some be Junos without eyes,  
Naiads without sources;  
Some be birds of paradise;  
Some, Olympian horses.

## IX.

Bring the dews the birds shake off  
Waking in the hedges;  
Those too, perfumed for a proof,  
From the lilies' edges:  
From our England's field and moor  
Bring them calm and white in,  
Whence to form a mirror pure  
For love's self-delighting.

## X.

Bring a gray cloud from the east,  
Where the lark is singing,  
(Something of the song at least  
Unlost in the bringing;)  
That shall be a morning-chair  
Poet-dream may sit in  
When it leans out on the air,  
Unrhymed and unwritten.

## XI.

Bring the red cloud from the sun.  
While he sinketh, catch it;  
That shall be a couch, with one  
Sidelong star to watch it. —  
Fit for poet's finest thought  
At the curfew sounding:  
Things unseen being nearer brought  
Than the seen around him.

## XII.

Poet's thought, not poet's sigh —  
'Las, they come together!  
Cloudy walls divide and fly,  
As in April weather.  
Cupola and column proud,  
Structure bright to see,  
Gone! except that moonlit cloud  
To which I looked with *thee*.

## XIII.

Let them! Wipe such visionings  
From the fancy's cartel;  
Love secures some fairer things  
Dowered with his immortal.  
The sun may darken, heaven be  
bowed;  
But still unchanged shall be,  
Here, in my soul, that moonlit  
cloud  
To which I looked with *THEE*!

A SABBATH MORNING  
AT SEA.

## I.

THE ship went on with solemn face;  
To meet the darkness on the deep  
The solemn ship went onward:  
I bowed down weary in the place;

For parting tears and present sleep  
Had weighed mine eyelids down-  
ward.

## II.

Thick sleep which shut all dreams  
from me,  
And kept my inner self apart,  
And quiet from emotion,  
Then brake away, and left me free,  
Made conscious of a human heart  
Betwixt the heaven and ocean.

## III.

The new sight, the new wondrous  
sight!  
The waters round me, turbulent,  
The skies impassive o'er me,  
Calm in a moonless, sunless light,  
Half-glorified by that intent  
Of holding the day-glory!

## IV.

Two pale thin clouds did stand upon  
The meeting line of sea and sky,  
With aspect still and mystic:  
I think they did foresee the sun,  
And rested on their prophecy  
In quietude majestic,

## V.

Then flushed to radiance where they  
stood,  
Like statues by the open tomb  
Of shining saints half risen.  
The sun! he came up to be viewed,  
And sky and sea made mighty room  
To inaugurate the vision.

## VI.

I oft had seen the dawnlight run  
As red wine through the hills, and  
break  
Through many a mist's inurning;  
But here no earth profaned the sun:  
Heaven, ocean, did alone partake  
The sacrament of morning.

## VII.

Away with thoughts fantastical!  
I would be humble to my worth,  
Self-guarded as self-doubted:  
Though here no earthly shadows fall,  
I, joying, grieving without earth,  
May desecrate without it.

## VIII.

God's sabbath morning sweeps the waves;  
 I would not praise the pageant high,  
 Yet miss the dedicature:  
 I, carried toward the sunless graves  
 By force of natural things — should  
 I  
 Exult in only nature?

## IX

And could I bear to sit alone  
 'Mid Nature's fixed benignities.  
 While my warm pulse was moving?  
 Too dark thou art, O glittering sun,  
 Too strait ye are, capacious seas,  
 To satisfy the loving!

## X.

It seems a better lot than so  
 To sit with friends beneath the beech,  
 And feel them dear and dearer;  
 Or follow children as they go  
 In pretty pairs, with softened speech,  
 As the church-bells ring nearer.

## XI.

Love me, sweet friends, this sabbath day!  
 The sea sings round me while ye rol!  
 Afar the hymn unaltered,  
 And kneel where once I knelt to pray,  
 And bless me deeper in the soul.  
 Because the voice has faltered.

## XII

And though this sabbath comes to me  
 Without the stolèd minister,  
 Or chanting congregation,  
 God's Spirit brings communion, HE  
 Who brooded soft on waters drear,  
 Creator on creation.

## XIII.

Himself, I think, shall draw me higher,  
 Where keep the saints with harp and song  
 An endless sabbath morning;  
 And on that sea commixed with fire  
 Oft drop their eyelids, raised too long  
 To the full Godhead's burning.

## A FLOWER IN A LETTER.

## I.

My lonely chamber next the sea  
 Is full of many flowers set free  
 By summer's earliest duty:  
 Dear friends upon the garden-walk  
 Might stop amid their fondest talk  
 To pull the least in beauty.

## II.

A thousand flowers, each seeming one,  
 That learnt by gazing on the sun  
 To counterfeit his shining;  
 Within whose leaves the holy dew  
 That falls from heaven has won anew  
 A glory in declining.

## III

Red roses, used to praises long,  
 Contented with the poet's song,  
 The nightingale's being over;  
 And lilies white, prepared to touch  
 The whitest thought, nor soil it much,  
 Of dreamer turned to lover.

## IV.

Deep violets, you liken to  
 The kindest eyes that look on you,  
 Without a thought disloyal;  
 And cactuses a queen might don,  
 If weary of a golden crown,  
 And still appear as royal.

## V.

Pansies for ladies all, — I wis  
 That none who wear such brooches  
 miss  
 A jewel in the mirror;  
 And tulips, children love to stretch  
 Their fingers down, to feel in each  
 Its beauty's secret nearer.

## VI.

Love's language may be talked with these:  
 To work out choicest sentences,  
 No blossoms can be meet;  
 And, such being used in Eastern bow-  
 ers,  
 Young maids may wonder if the flow-  
 ers  
 Or meanings be the sweeter.

## VII.

And, such being strewn before a bride,  
Her little foot may turn aside,  
Their longer bloom decreeing,  
Unless some voice's whispered sound  
Should make her gaze upon the  
ground  
Too earnestly for seeing.

## VIII.

And, such being scattered on a grave,  
Whoever mourneth there may have  
A type which seemeth worthy  
Of that fair body hid below,  
Which bloomed on earth a time ago,  
Then perished as the earthy.

## IX.

And such being wreathed for worldly  
feast,  
Across the brimming cup some guest,  
Their rainbow colors viewing,  
May feel them with a silent start,  
The covenant his childish heart  
With Nature made, renewing.

## X.

No flowers our gardened England  
hath  
To match with these in bloom and  
breath,  
Which from the world are hiding  
In sunny Devon moist with rills. —  
A nunnery of cloistered hills,  
The elements presiding.

## XI.

By Loddon's stream the flowers are  
fair  
That meet one gifted lady's care  
With prodigal rewarding,  
(For beauty is too used to run  
To Mitford's bower, to want the sun  
To light her through the garden).

## XII.

But here, all summers are comprised;  
The nightly frosts shrink exorcised  
Before the priestly moonshine;  
And every wind with stol'd feet,  
In wandering down the alleys sweet,  
Steps lightly on the sunshine,

## XIII.

And (having promised Harpocrate  
Among the nodding roses that  
No harm shall touch his daughters)

Gives quite away the rushing sound  
He dares not use upon such ground,  
To ever-trickling waters.

## XIV.

Yet sun and wind! what can ye do  
But make the leaves more brightly  
show  
In posies newly gathered?  
I look away from all your best,  
To one poor flower unlike the rest, —  
A little flower half withered.

## XV.

I do not think it ever was  
A pretty flower, — to make the grass  
Look greener where it reddened;  
And now it seems ashamed to be  
Alone in all this company,  
Of aspect shrunk and saddened.

## XVI.

A chamber-window was the spot  
It grew in from a garden-pot,  
Among the city shadows:  
If any, tending it, might seem  
To smile, 'twas only in a dream  
Of nature in the meadows.

## XVII.

How coldly on its head did fall  
The sunshine from the city-wall  
In pale refraction driven!  
How sadly plashed upon its leaves  
The raindrops, losing in the eaves  
The first sweet news of heaven!

## XVIII.

And those who planted gathered it  
In gamesome or in loving fit,  
And sent it, as a token  
Of what their city pleasures be,  
For one, in Devon by the sea  
And garden-blooms, to look on,

## XIX.

But SHE for whom the jest was meant,  
With a grave passion innocent  
Receiving what was given, —  
Oh if her face she turned then,  
Let none say 'twas to gaze again  
Upon the flowers of Devon!

## XX.

Because, whatever virtue dwells  
 In genial skies, warm oracles  
 For gardens brightly springing, —  
 The flower which grew beneath your  
 eyes,  
 Belovèd friends, to mine supplies  
 A beauty worthier singing.

## THE MASK.

## I.

I HAVE a smiling face, she said;  
 I have a jest for all I meet;  
 I have a garland for my head,  
 And all its flowers are sweet:  
 And so you call me gay, she said.

## II.

Grief taught to me this smile, she  
 said;  
 And Wrong did teach this jesting  
 bold;  
 These flowers were plucked from gar-  
 den-bed  
 While a death-chime was tolled:  
 And what now will you say? she  
 said.

## III.

Behind no prison-grate, she said,  
 Which slurs the sunshine half a  
 mile,  
 Live captives so uncomforted  
 As souls behind a smile.  
 God's pity let us pray, she said.

## IV.

I know my face is bright, she said;  
 Such brightness dying suns diffuse:  
 I bear upon my forehead shed  
 The sign of what I lose,  
 The ending of my day, she said.

## V.

If I dared leave this smile, she said,  
 And take a moan upon my mouth,  
 And tie a cypress round my head,  
 And let my tears run smooth,  
 It were the happier way, she said.

## VI.

And since that must not be, she said,  
 I fain your bitter world would  
 leave.  
 How calmly, calmly, smile the dead,  
 Who do not, therefore, grieve!  
 The yea of heaven is yea, she said.

## VII.

But in your bitter world, she said,  
 Face-joy's a costly mask to wear;  
 'Tis bought with pangs long nourish-  
 ed,  
 And rounded to despair:  
 Grief's earnest makes life's play, she  
 said.

## VIII.

Ye weep for those who weep? she  
 said —  
 Ah, fools! I bid you pass them by.  
 Go weep for those whose hearts have  
 bled  
 What time their eyes were dry.  
 Whom sadder can I say? she said.

## CALLS ON THE HEART.

## I.

FREE Heart, that singest to-day  
 Like a bird on the first green spray,  
 Wilt thou go forth to the world,  
 Where the hawk hath his wing un-  
 furled,  
 To follow, perhaps, thy way?  
 Where the famer thine own will  
 bind,  
 And, to make thee sing, will blind,  
 While the little hip grows for the free  
 behind?  
 Heart, wilt thou go?  
 — 'No, no!  
 Free hearts are better so.'

## II.

The world, thou hast heard it told,  
 Has counted its robber-gold,  
 And the pieces stick to the hand:  
 The world goes riding it fair and  
 grand,  
 While the truth is bought and  
 sold:

World-voices east, world-voices  
west,  
They call thee, Heart, from thine  
early rest,  
"Come hither, come hither, and be  
our guest."  
Heart, wilt thou go?  
— "No, no!  
Good hearts are calmer so."

## III.

Who calleth thee, Heart? World's  
Strife,  
With a golden heft to his knife;  
World's Mirth, with a finger fine  
That draws on a board in wine  
Her blood-red plans of life;  
World's Gain, with a brow knit  
down;  
World's Fame with a laurel crown  
Which rustles most as the leaves turn  
brown:  
Heart, wilt thou go?  
— "No, no!  
Calm hearts are wiser so."

## IV.

Hast heard that Proserpina  
(Once fooling) was snatched away  
To partake the dark king's seat,  
And the tears ran fast on her feet  
To think how the sun shone yes-  
terday?  
With her ankles sunken in asphodel  
She wept for the roses of earth  
which fell  
From her lap when the wild car drave  
to hell.  
Heart, wilt thou go?  
— "No, no!  
Wise hearts are warmer so."

## V.

And what is this place not seen,  
Where hearts may hide serene?  
" 'Tis a fair still house well kept,  
Which humble thoughts have swept,  
And holy prayers made clean.  
There I sit with Love in the sun,  
And we two never have done  
Singing sweeter songs than are guessed  
by one."  
Heart, wilt thou go?  
— "No, no!  
Warm hearts are fuller so."

## VI.

O Heart, O Love, I fear  
That love may be kept too near.  
Hast heard, O heart, that tale,  
How Love may be false and frail  
To a heart once holden dear?  
— "But this true love of mine  
Clings fast as the clinging vine,  
And mingles pure as the grapes in  
wine."  
Heart, wilt thou go?  
— "No, no!  
Full hearts beat higher so."

## VII.

O Heart, O Love, beware!  
Look up, and boast not there;  
For who has twirled at the pin?  
'Tis the World between Death and  
Sin, —  
The World and the world's De-  
spair!  
And Death has quickened his pace  
To the hearth with a mocking face,  
Familiar as Love in Love's own place.  
Heart, wilt thou go?  
— "Still, no!  
High hearts must grieve even so."

## VIII.

The house is waste to-day, —  
The leaf has dropt from the spray,  
The thorn pricketh through to the  
song:  
If summer doeth no wrong  
The winter will, they say,  
Sing, Heart! what heart replies?  
In vain we were calm and wise,  
If the tears un-kissed stand on in our  
eyes.  
Heart, wilt thou go?  
— "Ah, no!  
Grieved hearts must break even  
so."

## IX.

Howbeit all is not lost.  
The warm noon ends in frost,  
And worldly tongues of promise,  
Like sheep-bells die off from us  
On the desert hills cloud-crosst;  
Yet through the silence shall  
Pierce the death-angel's call,  
And "Come up hither," recover all.  
Heart, wilt thou go?  
— "I go!  
Broken hearts triumph so."



## WISDOM UNAPPLIED.

I.

If I were thou, O butterfly !  
And poised my purple wing to spy  
The sweetest flowers that live and die,

II.

I would not waste my strength on  
those,  
As thou; for summer has a close,  
And pansies bloom not in the snows.

III.

If I were thou, O working bee !  
And all that honey-gold I see  
Could delve from roses easily,

IV.

I would not hive it at man's door,  
As thou, that heirdom of my store  
Should make him rich, and leave me  
poor.

V.

If I were thou, O eagle proud !  
And screamed the thunder back  
aloud,  
And faced the lightning from the  
cloud.

VI.

I would not build my eyry-throne,  
As thou, upon a crumbling stone  
Which the next storm may trample  
down.

VII.

If I were thou, O gallant steed !  
With pawing hoof and dancing head,  
And eye outrunning thine own speed,

VIII.

I would not meeken to the rein,  
As thou, nor smooth my nostril plain  
From the glad desert's snort and  
strain.

IX.

If I were thou, red-breasted bird,  
With song at shut-up window heard,  
Like love's sweet yes too long de-  
ferred,

X.

I would not overstay delight,  
As thou, but take a swallow-flight  
Till the new spring returned to sight.

XI.

While yet I spake, a touch was laid  
Upon my brow, whose pride did fade  
As thus, methought, an angel said, —

XII.

“ If I were *thou* who sing'st this song,  
Most wise for others, and most strong  
In seeing right while doing wrong,

XIII.

“ I would not waste my cares, and  
choose,  
As *thou*, — to seek what thou must  
lose,  
Such gains as perish in the use.

XIV.

“ I would not work where none can  
win,  
As *thou*, — halfway 'twixt grief and  
sin,  
But look above, and judge within.

XV.

“ I would not let my pulse beat high,  
As *thou*, — towards fame's regality,  
Nor yet in love's great jeopardy.

XVI.

“ I would not champ the hard, cold bit,  
As thou, — of what the world thinks  
fit,  
But take God's freedom, using it.

XVII.

“ I would not play earth's winter out,  
As *thou*, — but gird my soul about,  
And live for life past death and doubt.

XVIII.

“ Then sing, O singer! but allow,  
Beast, fly, and bird, called foolish  
now,  
Are wise (for all thy scorn) as thou.”

## MEMORY AND HOPE.

## I.

BACK-LOOKING Memory  
 And prophet Hope both sprang from  
 out the ground, —  
 One, where the flashing of cherubic  
 sword  
 Fell sad in Eden's ward;  
 And one, from Eden earth within the  
 sound  
 Of the four rivers lapsing pleasantly,  
 What time the promise after curse was  
 said:  
 "Thy seed shall bruise his head."

## II.

Poor Memory's brain is wild,  
 As moonstruck by that flaming atmos-  
 phere  
 When she was born; her deep eyes  
 shine and shone  
 With light that conquereth sun  
 And stars to wanner paleness, year by  
 year:  
 With odorous gums she mixeth things  
 defiled;  
 She trampleth down earth's grasses  
 green and sweet  
 With her far-wandering feet.

## III.

She plucketh many flowers,  
 Their beauty on her bosom's coldness  
 killing;  
 She teacheth every melancholy sound  
 To winds and waters round;  
 She droppeth tears with seed, where  
 man is tilling  
 The rugged soil in his exhausted  
 hours;  
 She smileth — ah me! in her smile  
 doth go  
 A mood of deeper woe.

## IV.

Hope tripped on out of sight,  
 Crowned with an Eden wreath she  
 saw not wither,  
 And went a-nodding through the wil-  
 derness,  
 With brow that shone no less  
 Than a sea-gull's wing, brought nearer  
 by rough weather,  
 Searching the treeless rock for fruits  
 of light;

Her fair, quick feet being armed from  
 stones and cold  
 By slippers of pure gold.

## V.

Memory did Hope much wrong,  
 And, while she dreamed, her slippers  
 stole away;  
 But still she wended on with mirth  
 unheeding,  
 Although her feet were bleeding,  
 Till Memory tracked her on a certain  
 day,  
 And with most evil eyes did search  
 her long  
 And cruelly; whereat she sank to  
 ground  
 In a stark deadly swoond.

## VI.

And so my Hope were slain,  
 Had it not been that Thou wast stand-  
 ing near,  
 O Thou who saigest, "Live," to crea-  
 tures lying  
 In their own blood, and dying!  
 For Thou her forehead to Thine heart  
 didst rear,  
 And make its silent pulses sing again,  
 Pouring a new light o'er her darkened  
 eyne,  
 With tender tears from Thine.

## VII.

Therefore my Hope arose  
 From out her swoond, and gazed upon  
 Thy face;  
 And, meeting there that soft, subdu-  
 ing look  
 Which Peter's spirit shook,  
 Sank downward in a rapture, to em-  
 brace  
 Thy piercèd hands and feet with  
 kisses close,  
 And prayed Thee to assist her ever-  
 more  
 To "reach the things before."

## VIII.

Then gavest Thou the smile  
 Whence angel-wings thrill quick, like  
 summer lightning,  
 Vouchsafing rest beside Thee, where  
 she never  
 From Love and Faith may sever:  
 Whereat the Eden crown she saw not  
 whitening

A time ago, though whitening all the  
while,  
Reddened with life to hear the Voice  
which talked  
To Adam as he walked.

## HUMAN LIFE'S MYSTERY.

### I.

WE sow the glebe, we reap the corn,  
We build the house where we may  
rest,  
And then, at moments, suddenly  
We look up to the great wide sky,  
Inquiring wherefore we were born, —  
For earnest, or for jest?

### II.

The senses folding thick and dark  
About the stifled soul within,  
We guess diviner things beyond,  
And yearn to them with yearning  
fond:  
We strike out blindly to a mark  
Believed in, but not seen.

### III.

We vibrate to the pant and thrill  
Wherewith Eternity has curled  
In serpent-twine about God's seat;  
While, freshening upward to his feet,  
In gradual growth His full-leaved will  
Expands from world to world.

### IV.

And, in the tumult and excess  
Of act and passion under sun,  
We sometimes hear — oh, soft and far,  
As silver star did touch with star —  
The kiss of peace and righteousness  
Through all things that are done.

### V.

God keeps his holy mysteries  
Just on the outside of man's dream;  
In diapason slow, we think

To hear their pinions rise and sink,  
While they float pure beneath his eyes,  
Like swans adown a stream.

### VI.

Abstractions are they, from the forms  
Of his great beauty? exaltations  
From his great glory? strong pre-  
visions  
Of what we shall be? intuitions  
Of what we are, in calms and storms  
Beyond our peace and passions?

### VII.

Things nameless! which in passing  
so  
Do stroke us with a subtle grace;  
We say, "Who passes?" they are  
dumb;  
We cannot see them go or come,  
Their touches fall soft, cold, as snow  
Upon a blind man's face.

### VIII.

Yet, touching so, they draw above  
Our common thoughts to heaven's  
unknown,  
Our daily joy and pain advance  
To a divine significance,  
Our human love — O mortal love,  
That light is not its own!

### IX.

And sometimes horror chills our  
blood  
To be so near such mystic things,  
And we wrap round us for defence  
Our purple manners, moods of sense,  
As angels from the face of God  
Stand hidden in their wings.

### X.

And sometimes through life's heavy  
swound  
We grope for them, with strangled  
breath  
We stretch our hands abroad, and try  
To reach them in our agony,  
And widen so the broad life-wound  
Soon large enough for death.

## A CHILD'S THOUGHT OF GOD.

## I.

THEY say that God lives very high;  
But, if you look above the pines,  
You cannot see our God; and why?

## II.

And, if you dig down in the mines,  
You never see him in the gold;  
Though from him all that's glory  
shines.

## III.

God is so good he wears a fold  
Of heaven and earth across his face,  
Like secrets kept for love, untold.

## IV.

But still I feel that his embrace  
Slides down by thrills through all  
things made, —  
Through sight and sound of every  
place.

## V.

As if my tender mother laid  
On my shut lips her kisses' pres-  
sure,  
Half waking me at night, and said  
"Who kissed you through the dark,  
dear guesser?"

## THE CLAIM.

## I.

GRIEF sate upon a rock and sighed  
one day,  
(Sighing is all her rest)  
"Well-away, well-away, ah well-  
away!"  
As ocean beat the stone, did she her  
breast,  
"Ah well-away! ah me! alas, ah  
me!"  
Such sighing uttered she.

## II.

A cloud spake out of heaven, as soft  
as rain  
That falls on water: "Lo,  
The winds have wandered from me!  
I remain  
Alone in the sky-waste, and cannot  
go  
To lean my whiteness on the moun-  
tain blue  
Till wanted for more dew.

## III.

"The sun has struck my brain to  
weary peace,  
Whereby constrained and pale  
I spin for him a larger golden fleece  
Than Jason's, yearning for as full a  
sail.  
Sweet Grief, when thou hast sighèd  
to thy mind,  
Give me a sigh for wind,

## IV.

And let it carry me adown the west."  
But Love, who prostrated  
Lay at Grief's foot, his lifted eyes  
possessed  
Of her full image, answered in her  
stead;  
"Now nay, now nay! she shall not  
give away  
What is my wealth, for any Cloud  
that flieth:  
Where Grief makes moan,  
Love claims his own.  
And therefore do I lie here night and  
day,  
And eke my life out with the breath  
she sigheth."

## SONG OF THE ROSE.

ATTRIBUTED TO SAPPHO.

(From Achilles Tatius)

IF Zeus chose us a king of the flow-  
ers in his mirth,  
He would call to the rose, and would  
royally crown it;

For the rose, ho, the rose! is the  
 grace of the earth,  
 Is the light of the plants that are  
 growing upon it:  
 For the rose, ho, the rose! is the eye  
 of the flowers,  
 Is the blush of the meadows that  
 feel themselves fair,  
 Is the lightning of beauty that strikes  
 through the bowers  
 On pale lovers who sit in the glow  
 unaware.  
 Ho, the rose breathes of love! ho, the  
 rose lifts the cup  
 To the red lips of Cypris invoked  
 for a guest!  
 Ho, the rose, having curled its sweet  
 leaves for the world,  
 Takes delight in the motion its  
 petals keep up,  
 As they laugh to the wind as it laughs  
 from the west!

### A DEAD ROSE.

#### I.

O ROSE, who dares to name thee?  
 No longer roseate now, nor soft nor  
 sweet,  
 But pale and hard and dry as stubble  
 wheat,  
 Kept seven years in a drawer, thy  
 titles shame thee.

#### II.

The breeze that used to blow thee  
 Between the hedgerow thorns, and  
 take away  
 An odor up the lane to last all day,  
 If breathing now, unsweetened  
 would forego thee.

#### III.

The sun that used to smite thee,  
 And mix his glory in thy gorgeous  
 urn,  
 Till bean appeared to bloom, and  
 flower to burn,  
 If shining now, with not a hue would  
 light thee.

#### IV.

The dew that used to wet thee,  
 And, white first, grow incarnadined  
 because  
 It lay upon thee where the crimson  
 was,  
 If dropping now, would darken  
 where it met thee

#### V.

The fly that lit upon thee  
 To stretch the tendrils of its tiny feet  
 Along thy leaf's pure edges after  
 heat,  
 If lighting now, would coldly  
 overrun thee.

#### VI.

The bee that once did suck thee,  
 And build thy perfumed ambers up  
 his hive,  
 And swoon in thee for joy, till scarce  
 alive,  
 If passing now, would blindly over-  
 look thee.

#### VII.

The heart doth recognize thee.  
 Alone, alone! the heart doth smell  
 thee sweet.  
 Doth view thee fair, doth judge thee  
 most complete,  
 Perceiving all those changes that  
 disguise thee.

#### VIII.

Yes, and the heart doth owe thee  
 More love, dead rose, than to any  
 roses bold  
 Which Julia wears at dances, smiling  
 cold:  
 Lie still upon this heart which  
 breaks below thee.

### THE EXILE'S RETURN.

#### I.

WHEN from thee, weeping, I removed,  
 And from my land for years,  
 I thought not to return, beloved,  
 With those same parting tears.  
 I come again to hill and lea  
 Weeping for thee.

## II.

I clasped thine hand when standing  
last  
Upon the shore in sight.  
The land is green, the ship is fast,  
I shall be there to-night.  
I shall be there — no longer *we* —  
No more with thee !

## III.

Had I beheld thee dead and still,  
I might more clearly know  
How heart of thine could turn as chill  
As hearts by nature so;  
How change could touch the false-  
hood-free  
And changeless *thee*.

## IV.

But now thy fervid looks last seen  
Within my soul remain:  
'Tis hard to think that *they* have been,  
To be no more again;  
That I shall vainly wait, ah me !  
A word from thee.

## V.

I could not bear to look upon  
That mound of funeral clay  
Where one sweet voice is silence,  
one  
Ethereal brow, decay;  
Where all thy mortal I may see,  
But never thee.

## VI.

For thou art where all friends are  
gone  
Whose parting pain is o'er;  
And I, who love and weep alone,  
Where thou wilt weep no more,  
Weep bitterly and selfishly  
For *me*, not *thee*.

## VII.

I know, beloved, thou canst not know  
That I endure this pain;  
For saints in heaven, the Scriptures  
show,  
Can never grieve again:  
And grief known mine, even there,  
would be  
Still shared by thee.

## THE SLEEP.

"He giveth His beloved sleep." — *Ps.*  
cxxxvii. 2.

## I.

OF all the thoughts of God that are  
Berne inward into souls afar  
Along the Psalmist's music deep,  
Now tell me if that any is,  
For gift or grace, surpassing this, —  
"He giveth His beloved sleep."

## II.

What would we give to our beloved ?  
The hero's heart to be unmoved,  
The poet's star-tuned harp to sweep,  
The patriot's voice to teach and rouse,  
The monarch's crown to light the  
brows? —  
He giveth His beloved sleep.

## III.

What do we give to our beloved ?  
A little faith all undisproved,  
A little dust to overweep,  
And bitter memories to make  
The whole earth blasted for our sake:  
He giveth His beloved sleep.

## IV.

"Sleep soft, beloved !" we sometimes  
say,  
Who have no tune to charm away  
Sad dreams that through the eyelids  
creep;  
But never doleful dream again  
Shall break the happy slumber when  
He giveth His beloved sleep.

## V.

O earth, so full of dreary noises !  
O men with wailing in your voices !  
O delvèd gold the wailers heap !  
O strife, O curse, that o'er it fall !  
God strikes a silence through you all,  
And giveth His beloved sleep.

## VI.

His dew's drop mutely on the hill,  
His cloud above it saileth still,  
Though on its slope men sow and  
reap:  
More softly than the dew is shed,  
Or cloud is floated overhead,  
He giveth His beloved sleep.

## VII.

Ay, men may wonder while they scan  
A living, thinking, feeling man  
Confirmed in such a rest to keep;  
But angels say, and through the word  
I think their happy smile is *heard*,  
“ He giveth His belovèd sleep.”

## VIII.

For me, my heart that erst did go  
Most like a tired child at a show,  
That sees through tears the mum-  
mers leap,  
Would now its wearied vision close,  
Would childlike on His love repose  
Who giveth His belovèd sleep.

## IX.

And friends, dear friends, when it  
shall be  
That this low breath is gone from me,  
And round my bier ye come to weep,  
Let one most loving of you all,  
Say, “ Not a tear must o'er her fall !  
He giveth His belovèd sleep.”

## THE MEASURE.

“ He comprehended the dust of the earth in a  
measure (שֶׁלִישׁ).” — *Isa.* xl.

“ Thou givest them tears to drink in a measure  
(שֶׁלִישׁ).”<sup>1</sup> — *Ps.* lxxx.

## I.

God the Creator, with a pulseless  
hand  
Of unoriginated power, hath weighed  
The dust of earth and tears of man in  
one  
Measure, and by one weight:  
So saith his holy book.

## II.

Shall we, then, who have issued from  
the dust,  
And there return — shall we who toil  
for dust  
And wrap our winnings in this dusty  
life,

<sup>1</sup> I believe that the word occurs in no  
other part of the Hebrew Scriptures.

Say, “ No more tears, Lord God !  
The measure runneth o'er ” ?

## III.

O Holder of the balance, laughest  
thou ?  
Nay, Lord ! be gentler to our foolish-  
ness,  
For his sake who assumed our dust,  
and turns  
On thee pathetic eyes  
Still moistened with our tears.

## IV.

And teach us, O our Father, while we  
weep,  
To look in patience upon earth, and  
learn —  
Waiting, in that meek gesture, till at  
last  
These tearful eyes be filled  
With the dry dust of death.

## COWPER'S GRAVE.

## I.

It is a place where poets crowned  
may feel the heart's decaying;  
It is a place where happy saints may  
weep amid their praying:  
Yet let the grief and humbleness as  
low as silence languish:  
Earth surely now may give her calm  
to whom she gave her anguish.

## II.

O poets, from a maniac's tongue was  
poured the deathless singing !  
O Christians, at your cross of hope a  
hopeless hand was elinging !  
O men, this man in brotherhood your  
weary paths beguiling,  
Groaned inly while he taught you  
peace, and died while ye were  
smiling !

## III.

And now, what time ye all may read  
through dimming tears his story,  
How discord on the music fell, and  
darkness on the glory,

And how when, one by one, sweet  
sounds and wandering lights  
departed,  
He wore no less a loving face because  
so broken-hearted,

## IV.

He shall be strong to sanctify the  
poet's high vocation,  
And bow the meekest Christian down  
in meeker adoration;  
Nor ever shall he be, in praise, by  
wise or good forsaken,  
Named softly as the household name  
of one whom God hath taken.

## V.

With quiet sadness and no gloom I  
learn to think upon him,  
With meekness that is gratefulness to  
God whose heaven hath won  
him,  
Who suffered once the madness-cloud  
to His own love to blind him;  
But gently led the blind along where  
breath and bird could find him,

## VI.

And wrought within his shattered  
brain such quick poetic senses  
As hills have language for, and stars,  
harmonious influences:  
The pulse of dew upon the grass kept  
his within its number,  
And silent shadows from the trees re-  
freshed him like a slumber.

## VII.

Wild, timid hares were drawn from  
woods to share his home-ca-  
resses,  
Uplooking to his human eyes with  
sylvan tendernesses:  
The very world, by God's constraint,  
from falsehood's ways remov-  
ing,  
Its women and its men became, be-  
side him, true and loving.

## VIII.

And though, in blindness, he re-  
mained unconscious of that  
guiding,  
And things provided came without  
the sweet sense of providing,

He testified this solemn truth, while  
frenzy desolated,  
— Nor man nor nature satisfies whom  
only God created.

## IX.

Like a sick child that knoweth not  
his mother while she blesses,  
And drops upon his burning brow  
the coolness of her kisses;  
That turns his fevered eyes around —  
“ My mother! where's my  
mother ? ”  
As if such tender words and deeds  
could come from any other! —

## X.

The fever gone, with leaps of heart  
he sees her bending o'er him,  
Her face all pale from watchful love,  
— the unwearied love she bore  
him! —  
Thus woke the poet from the dream  
his life's long fever gave him,  
Beneath those deep pathetic Eyes  
which closed in death to save  
him.

## XI.

Thus? oh, not *thus!* no type of earth  
can image that awaking  
Wherein he scarcely heard the chant  
of seraphs round him breaking,  
Or felt the new immortal throb of  
soul from body parted,  
But felt those eyes alone, and knew,  
— “ *My Saviour! not deserted!* ”

## XII.

Deserted! Who hath dreamt, that  
when the cross in darkness  
rested,  
Upon the Victim's hidden face no love  
was manifested?  
What frantic hands outstretched have  
e'er the atoning drops averted?  
What tears have washed them from  
the soul, that *one* should be de-  
serted?

## XIII.

Deserted! God could separate from  
his own essence rather;  
And Adam's sins *have* swept between  
the righteous Son and Father:



Yea, once Immanuel's orphaned cry  
his universe hath shaken —  
It went up single, echoless, "My  
God, I am forsaken!"

## XIV.

It went up from the Holy's lips amid  
his lost creation,  
That of the lost no son should use  
those words of desolation;  
That earth's worst frenzies, marring  
hope, should mar not hope's  
fruition;  
And I, on Cowper's grave, should see  
his rapture in a vision.

## THE WEAKEST THING.

## I.

WHICH is the weakest thing of all  
Mine heart can ponder?  
The sun a little cloud can pall  
With darkness yonder?  
The cloud a little wind can move  
Where'er it listeth?  
The wind a little leaf above,  
Though sear, resisteth?

## II.

What time that yellow leaf was green  
My days were gladder;  
But now, whatever spring may mean,  
I must grow sadder.  
Ah me! a leaf with sighs can wring  
My lips asunder?  
Then is mine heart the weakest thing  
Itself can ponder.

## III.

Yet, heart, when sun and cloud are  
pined  
And drop together,  
And, at a blast which is not wind,  
The forests wither,  
Thou, from the darkening deathly  
curse,  
To glory breakest, —  
The strongest of the universe  
Guarding the weakest!

## THE PET NAME.

Which from THEIR lips seemed a caress."  
MISS MITFORD'S *Dramatic Scenes*.

## I.

I HAVE a name, a little name,  
Uncadenced for the ear,  
Unhonored by ancestral claim,  
Unsanctified by prayer and psalm  
The solemn font anear.

## II.

It never did to pages wove  
For gay romance belong;  
It never dedicate did move  
As "Sacharissa" unto love,  
"Orinda," unto song.

## III.

Though I write books, it will be read  
Upon the leaves of none;  
And afterward, when I am dead,  
Will ne'er be graved, for sight or  
tread,  
Across my funeral-stone.

## IV.

This name, whoever chance to call,  
Perhaps your smile may win;  
Nay, do not smile! mine eyelids fall  
Over mine eyes, and feel withal  
The sudden tears within.

## V.

Is there a leaf that greenly grows  
Where summer meadows bloom,  
But gathereth the winter snows,  
And changeth to the hue of those,  
If lasting till they come?

## VI.

Is there a word, or jest, or game,  
But time incrusteth round  
With sad associate thought the same?  
And so to me my very name  
Assumes a mournful sound.

## VII.

My brother gave that name to me  
When we were children twain,  
When names acquired baptismally  
Were hard to utter, as to see  
That life had any pain.

## VIII.

No shade was on us then, save one  
Of chestnuts from the hill;  
And through the word our laugh did  
run  
As part thereof: the mirth being  
done,  
He calls me by it still.

## IX.

Nay, do not smile! I hear in it  
What none of you can hear,—  
The talk upon the willow seat,  
The bird and wind that did repeat  
Around our human cheer.

## X.

I hear the birthday's noisy bliss.  
My sisters' woodland glee;  
My father's praise I did not miss,  
When, stooping down, he cared to kiss  
The poet at his knee,—

## XI.

And voices which, to name me, aye  
Their tenderest tones were keep-  
ing—  
To some I never more can say  
An answer till God wipes away  
In heaven these drops of weeping.

## XII.

My name to me a sadness wears;  
No murmurs cross my mind—  
Now God be thanked for these thick  
tears  
Which show, of those departed years.  
Sweet memories left behind.

## XIII.

Now God be thanked for years in-  
wrought  
With love which softens yet;  
Now God be thanked for every  
thought  
Which is so tender it has caught  
Earth's guerdon of regret.

## XIV.

Earth saddens, never shall remove  
Affections purely given;  
And e'en that mortal grief shall prove  
The immortality of love,  
And heighten it with heaven.

## THE MOURNING MOTHER.

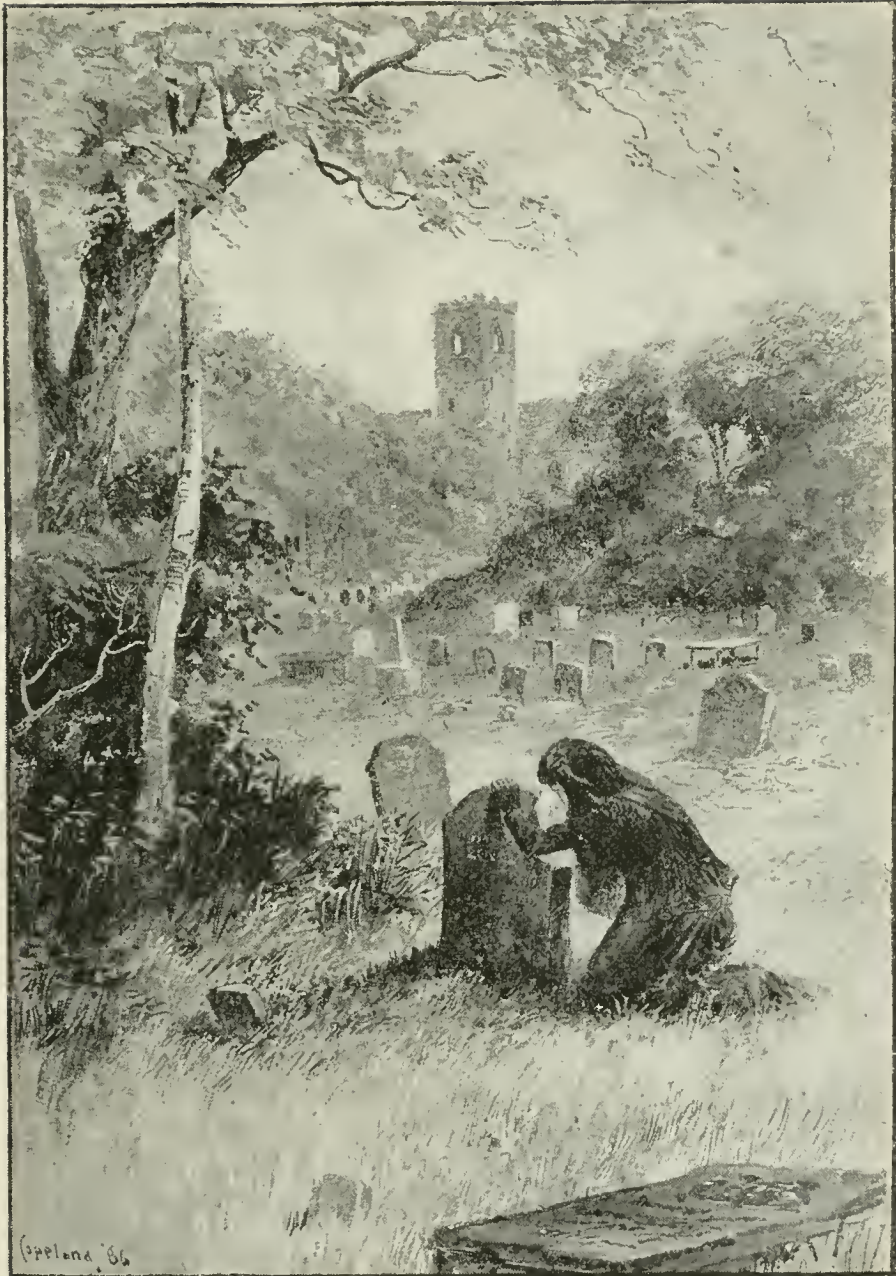
(OF THE DEAD BLIND.)

## I.

Dost thou weep, mourning mother,  
For thy blind boy in grave?  
That no more with each other,  
Sweet counsel ye can have?  
That he, left dark by nature,  
Can never more be led  
By thee, maternal creature,  
Along smooth paths instead?  
That thou canst no more show him  
The sunshine, by the heat;  
The river's silver flowing,  
By murmurs at his feet?  
The foliage, by its coolness;  
The roses, by their smell;  
And all creation's fulness,  
By Love's invisible?  
Weepest thou to behold not  
His meek blind eyes again,—  
Closed doorways which were folded,  
And prayed against in vain,  
And under which sate smiling  
The child-mouth evermore,  
As one who watcheth, wiling  
The time by, at a door?  
And weepest thou to feel not  
His clinging hand on thine,  
Which now, at dream-time, will not  
Its cold touch disintwine?  
And weepest thou still after,  
Oh, never more to mark  
His low soft words, made softer  
By speaking in the dark?  
Weep on, thou mourning mother!

## II.

But since to him, when living,  
Thou wast both sun and moon,  
Look o'er his grave, surviving,  
From a high sphere alone:  
Sustain that exaltation,  
Expand that tender light,  
And hold in mother-passion  
Thy blessed in thy sight.  
See how he went out straightway  
From the dark world he knew—  
No twilight in the gateway  
To mediate 'twixt the two—  
Into the sudden glory,  
Out of the dark he trod,  
Departing from before thee  
At once to light and God!



“Dost thou weep, mourning mother,  
For thy blind boy in the grave?” — Page 402.

UNIVERSITY  
OF  
CALIFORNIA

For the first face, beholding  
 The Christ's in its divine,  
 For the first place, the golden  
 And tideless hyaline,  
 With trees at lasting summer  
 That rock to songful sound,  
 While angels the new-comer  
 Wrap a still smile around.  
 Oh, in the blessed psalm now,  
 His happy voice he tries,  
 Spreading a thicker palm-bough  
 Than others o'er his eyes!  
 Yet still, in all the singing,  
 Thinks haply of thy song,  
 Which, in his life's first springing,  
 Sang to him all night long;  
 And wishes it beside him,  
 With kissing lips that cool  
 And soft did overglide him,  
 To make the sweetness full.  
 Look up, O mourning mother!  
 Thy blind boy walks in light:  
 Ye wait for one another  
 Before God's infinite.  
 But thou art now the darkest,  
 Thou mother left below;  
 Thou, the sole blind, — thou mark-  
 est,  
 Content that it be so, —  
 Until ye two have meeting  
 Where heaven's pearl-gate is,  
 And *he* shall lead thy feet in,  
 As once thou leddest *his*.  
 Wait on, thou mourning mother!

## A VALEDICTION.

1.

God be with thee, my beloved — God  
 be with thee!  
 Else alone thou goest forth,  
 Thy face unto the north,  
 Moor and pleasance all around thee  
 and beneath thee  
 Looking equal in one snow;  
 While I, who try to reach thee,  
 Vainly follow, vainly follow,  
 With the farewell and the hollo,

And cannot reach thee so.  
 Alas, I can but teach thee!  
 God be with thee, my beloved — God  
 be with thee!

II

Can I teach thee, my beloved — can  
 I teach thee?  
 If I said, "Go left or right,"  
 The counsel would be light,  
 The wisdom poor of all that could en-  
 rich thee;  
 My right would show like left;  
 My raising would depress thee,  
 My choice of light would blind thee,  
 Of way, would leave behind thee,  
 Of end, would leave bereft.  
 Alas, I can but bless thee!  
 May God teach thee, my beloved —  
 may God teach thee!

III.

Can I bless thee, my beloved — can I  
 bless thee?  
 What blessing word can I  
 From mine own tears keep dry?  
 What flowers grow in my field where-  
 with to dress thee?  
 My good reverts to ill;  
 My calmnesses would move thee,  
 My softnesses would prick thee,  
 My bindings up would break thee,  
 My crownings, curse and kill.  
 Alas, I can but love thee!  
 May God bless thee, my beloved —  
 may God bless thee!

IV.

Can I love thee, my beloved — can I  
 love thee?  
 And is *this* like love, to stand  
 With no help in my hand,  
 When strong as death I fain would  
 watch above thee?  
 My love-kiss can deny  
 No tear that falls beneath it;  
 Mine oath of love can swear thee  
 From no ill that comes near thee,  
 And thou diest while I breathe it,  
 And I — I can but die!  
 May God love thee, my beloved —  
 may God love thee!

## LESSONS FROM THE GORSE.

"To win the secret of a weed's plain heart."  
LOWELL.

## I.

MOUNTAIN gorses, ever golden,  
Cankered not the whole year long,  
Do ye teach us to be strong,  
Howsoever pricked and holden,  
Like your thorny blooms, and so  
Trodden on by rain and snow,  
Up the hillside of this life, as bleak  
as where ye grow?

## II.

Mountain blossoms, shining blossoms,  
Do ye teach us to be glad  
When no summer can be had,  
Blooming in our inward bosoms? —  
Ye whom God preserveth still,  
Set as lights upon a hill,  
Tokens to the wintry earth that beauty  
liveth still.

## III.

Mountain gorses, do ye teach us  
From that academic chair  
Canopied with azure air,  
That the wisest word man reaches  
Is the humblest he can speak? —  
Ye who live on mountain peak,  
Yet live low along the ground, beside  
the grasses meek.

## IV.

Mountain gorses, since Linnæus  
Knelt beside you on the sod,  
For your beauty thanking God,  
For your teaching, ye should see us  
Bowing in prostration new!  
Whence arisen, if one or two  
Drops be on our cheeks, O world,  
they are not tears, but dew.

## THE LADY'S YES.

## I.

"YES." I answered you last night;  
"No," this morning, sir, I say:  
Colors seen by candle-light  
Will not look the same by day.

## II.

When the viols played their best,  
Lamps above, and laughs below,  
*Love me* sounded like a jest,  
Fit for *yes*, or fit for *no*.

## III.

Call me false, or call me free,  
Vow, whatever light may shine,  
No man on your face shall see  
Any grief for change on mine.

## IV.

Yet the sin is on us both;  
Time to dance is not to woo:  
Wooing light makes fickle troth,  
Scorn of *me* recoils on *you*.

## V.

Learn to win a lady's faith  
Nobly, as the thing is high,  
Bravely, as for life and death,  
With a loyal gravity.

## VI.

Lead her from the festive boards,  
Point her to the starry skies;  
Guard her by your truthful words  
Pure from courtship's flatteries.

## VII.

By your truth she shall be true,  
Ever true, as wives of yore;  
And her *yes* once said to you  
SHALL be *yes* forevermore.

## A WOMAN'S SHORTCOMINGS.

## I.

SHE has laughed as softly as if she  
sighed,  
She has counted six and over,  
Of a purse well filled, and a heart well  
tried —  
Oh each a worthy lover!  
They "give her time;" for her soul  
must slip  
Where the world has set the grooving:  
She will lie to none with her fair red  
lip —  
But love seeks truer loving.

## II.

She trembles her fan in a sweetness  
dumb,  
As her thoughts were beyond re-  
calling,  
With a glance for *one*, and a glance  
for *some*,  
From her eyelids rising and falling;  
Speaks common words with a blush-  
ful air,  
Hears bold words, unreproving;  
But her silence says — what she never  
will swear —  
And love seeks better loving.

## III.

Go, lady, lean to the night-guitar,  
And drop a smile to the bringer,  
Then smile as sweetly, when he is far,  
At the voice of an indoor singer.  
Bask tenderly beneath tender eyes:  
Glance lightly on their removing;  
And join new vows to old perjuries —  
But dare not call it loving.

## IV.

Unless you can think, when the song  
is done,  
No other is soft in the rhythm;  
Unless you can feel, when left by one,  
That all men else go with him;  
Unless you can know, when unpraised  
by his breath,  
That your beauty itself wants prov-  
ing;  
Unless you can swear, "For life, for  
death!" —  
Oh fear to call it loving!

## V.

Unless you can muse in a crowd all  
day,  
On the absent face that fixed you;  
Unless you can love, as the angels  
may,  
With the breadth of heaven betwixt  
you;  
Unless you can dream that his faith is  
fast,  
Through behoving and unbehoving;  
Unless you can *die* when the dream is  
past —  
Oh never call it loving!

A MAN'S REQUIRE-  
MENTS.

## I.

Love me, sweet, with all thou art,  
Feeling, thinking, seeing;  
Love me in the lightest part,  
Love me in full being.

## II.

Love me with thine open youth  
In its frank surrender,  
With the vowing of thy mouth,  
With its silence tender.

## III.

Love me with thine azure eyes,  
Made for earnest granting;  
Taking color from the skies,  
Can heaven's truth be wanting?

## IV.

Love me with their lids, that fall  
Snow-like at first meeting;  
Love me with thine heart, that all  
Neighbors then see beating.

## V.

Love me with thine hand stretched  
out  
Freely, open minded;  
Love me with thy loitering foot,  
Hearing one behind it.

## VI.

Love me with thy voice, that turns  
Sudden faint above me;  
Love me with thy blush, that burns  
When I murmur, *Love me!*

## VII.

Love me with thy thinking soul,  
Break it to love-sighing;  
Love me with thy thoughts that roll  
On through living — dying.

## VIII.

Love me in thy gorgeous airs,  
When the world has crowned thee;  
Love me, kneeling at thy prayers,  
With the angels round thee.

## IX.

Love me pure, as musers do,  
Up the woodlands shady;  
Love me gayly, fast, and true,  
As a winsome lady.

## X.

Through all hopes that keep us brave,  
Farther off or nigher;  
Love me for the house and grave —  
And for something higher.

## XI.

Thus, if thou wilt prove me, dear,  
Woman's love no fable,  
I will love *thee* — half a year —  
As a man is able.

## A YEAR'S SPINNING.

## I.

HE listened at the porch that day,  
To hear the wheel go on and on;  
And then it stopped, ran back a way,  
While through the door he brought  
the sun.  
But now my spinning is all done.

## II.

He sate beside me, with an oath  
That love ne'er ended, once begun:  
I smiled, believing for us both  
What was the truth for only one.  
And now my spinning is all done.

## III.

My mother cursed me that I heard  
A young man's wooing as I spun:  
Thanks, cruel mother, for that word,  
For I have since a harder known.  
And now my spinning is all done.

## IV.

I thought — O God! — my first-born's  
cry  
Both voices to mine ear would  
drown:

I listened in mine agony —  
It was the *silence* made me groan.  
And now my spinning is all done.

## V.

Bury me 'twixt my mother's grave,  
(Who cursed me on her death-bed  
lone,  
And my dead baby's (God it save!)  
Who, not to bless me, would not  
moan.  
And now my spinning is all done.

## VI.

A stone upon my heart and head,  
But no name written on the stone:  
Sweet neighbors, whisper low instead,  
"This sinner was a loving one —  
And now her spinning is all done."

## VII.

And let the door ajar remain,  
In case he should pass by anon;  
And leave the wheel out very plain,  
That HE, when passing in the sun,  
May see the spinning is all done.

## CHANGE UPON CHANGE.

## I.

FIVE months ago the stream did flow,  
The lilies bloomed within the sedge,  
And we were lingering to and fro  
Where none will track thee in this  
snow,  
Along the stream, beside the hedge.  
Ah, sweet, be free to love and go!  
For, if I do not hear thy foot,  
The frozen river is as mute,  
The flowers have dried down to the  
root:  
And why, since these be changed  
since May,  
Shouldst *thou* change less than  
*they*?



## II.

And slow, slow as the winter snow,  
 The tears have drifted to mine  
 eyes;  
 And my poor cheeks, five months ago  
 Set blushing at thy praises so,  
 Put paleness on for a disguise.  
 Ah, sweet, be free to praise and go!  
 For, if my face is turned too pale,  
 It was thine oath that first did  
 fail;  
 It was thy love proved false and  
 frail:  
 And why, since these be changed  
 enow,  
 Should *I* change less than *thou*?

---

 THAT DAY.
 

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## I.

I STAND by the river where both of us  
 stood,  
 And there is but one shadow to dark-  
 en the flood;  
 And the path leading to it, where  
 both used to pass,  
 Has the step of but one to take dew  
 from the grass, —  
 One forlorn since that day.

## II.

The flowers of the margin are many  
 to see;  
 None stoops at my bidding to pluck  
 them for me.  
 The bird in the alder sings loudly and  
 long:  
 My low sound of weeping disturbs  
 not his song,  
 As thy vow did that day.

## III.

I stand by the river, I think of the  
 vow;  
 Oh, calm as the place is, vow-breaker,  
 be thou!

I leave the flower growing, the bird  
 unreprieved:  
 Would I trouble *thee* rather than  
*them*, my beloved, —  
 And my lover that day?

## IV.

Go, be sure of my love, by that trea-  
 son forgiven;  
 Of my prayers, by the blessings they  
 win thee from heaven;  
 Of my grief (guess the length of the  
 sword by the sheath's)  
 By the silence of life, more pathetic  
 than death's!  
 Go, — be clear of that day!

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 A REED.
 

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## I.

I AM no trumpet, but a reed;  
 No flattering breath shall from me  
 lead  
 A silver sound, a hollow sound:  
 I will not ring, for priest or king,  
 One blast that in re-echoing  
 Would leave a bondsman faster  
 bound.

## II.

I am no trumpet, but a reed, —  
 A broken reed, the wind indeed  
 Left flat upon a dismal shore;  
 Yet if a little maid or child  
 Should sigh within it, earnest-mild  
 This reed will answer evermore.

## III.

I am no trumpet, but a reed;  
 Go, tell the fishers, as they spread  
 Their nets along the river's edge,  
 I will not tear their nets at all,  
 Nor pierce their hands if they should  
 fall:  
 Then let them leave me in the  
 sedge.

## THE DEAD PAN.

Excited by Schiller's "Götter Griechenlands," and partly founded on a well-known tradition mentioned in a treatise of Plutarch ("De Oraculorum Defectu"), according to which, at the hour of the Saviour's agony, a cry of "Great Pan is dead!" swept across the waves in the hearing of certain mariners,—and the oracles ceased.

It is in all veneration to the memory of the deathless Schiller that I oppose a doctrine still more dishonoring to poetry than to Christianity.

As Mr. Kenyon's graceful and harmonious paraphrase of the German poem was the first occasion of the turning of my thoughts in this direction, I take advantage of the pretence to indulge my feelings (which overflow on other grounds) by inscribing my lyric to that dear friend and relative, with the earnestness of appreciating esteem, as well as of affectionate gratitude. 1844.

## I.

Gods of Hellas, gods of Hellas,  
Can ye listen in your silence?  
Can your mystic voices tell us  
Where ye hide? In floating islands,  
With a wind that evermore  
Keeps you out of sight of shore?  
Pan, Pan, is dead.

## II.

In what revels are ye sunken,  
In old Ethiopia?  
Have the pygmies made you drunken,  
Bathing in mandragora  
Your divine pale lips, that shiver  
Like the lotus in the river?  
Pan, Pan, is dead.

## III.

Do ye sit there still in slumber,  
In gigantic Alpine rows?  
The black poppies out of number,  
Nodding, dripping from your brows  
To the red lees of your wine,  
And so kept alive and fine?  
Pan, Pan, is dead.

## IV.

Or lie crushed your stagnant corses  
Where the silver spheres roll on,  
Stung to life by centric forces  
Thrown like rays out from the sun?  
While the smoke of your old altars  
Is the shroud that round you welters?  
Great Pan is dead.

## V.

"Gods of Hellas, gods of Hellas,"  
Said the old Hellenic tongue,  
Said the hero-oaths, as well as  
Poet's songs the sweetest sung,  
Have ye grown deaf in a day?  
Can ye speak not yea or nay,  
Since Pan is dead?

## VI.

Do ye leave your rivers flowing  
All alone, O Naiades,  
While your drenchèd locks dry slow  
in  
This cold, feeble sun and breeze?  
Not a word the Naiads say,  
Though the rivers run for aye;  
For Pan is dead.

## VII.

From the gloaming of the oak-wood,  
O ye Dryads, could ye flee?  
At the rushing thunderstroke would  
No sob tremble through the tree?  
Not a word the Dryads say,  
Though the forests wave for aye;  
For Pan is dead.

## VIII.

Have ye left the mountain-places,  
Oreads wild, for other tryst?  
Shall we see no sudden faces  
Strike a glory through the mist?  
Not a sound the silence thrills  
Of the everlasting hills:  
Pan, Pan, is dead.

## IX.

O twelve gods of Plato's vision,  
Crowned to starry wanderings,  
With your chariots in procession,  
And your silver clash of wings!  
Very pale ye seem to rise,  
Ghosts of Grecian deities,  
Now Pan is dead.

## X.

Jove, that right hand is unloaded,  
Whence the thunder did prevail,  
While in idiocy of godhead  
Thou art staring the stars pale!  
And thine eagle, blind and old,  
Roughs his feathers in the cold.  
Pan, Pan, is dead.

## XI.

Where, O Juno, is the glory  
Of thy regal look and tread?  
Will they lay forevermore thee  
On thy dim, straight golden bed?  
Will thy queendom all lie hid  
Meekly under either lid?  
Pan, Pan, is dead.

## XII.

Ha, Apollo! floats his golden  
Hair all mist-like where he stands,  
While the Muses hang infolding  
Knee and foot with faint, wild hands?  
'Neath the clanging of thy bow,  
Niobe looked lost as thou!  
Pan, Pan, is dead.

## XIII.

Shall the casque with its brown iron,  
Pallas' broad blue eyes eclipse,  
And no hero take inspiring  
From the god-Greek of her lips?  
'Neath her olive dost thou sit,  
Mars the mighty, cursing it?  
Pan, Pan, is dead.

## XIV.

Bacchus, Bacchus! on the panther  
He swoons, bound with his own vines;  
And his Mænads slowly saunter,  
Head aside, among the pines,  
While they murmur dreamingly,  
"Evohe — ah — evohé — !"  
Ah, Pan is dead!"

## XV.

Neptune lies beside the trident,  
Dull and senseless as a stone;  
And old Pluto, deaf and silent,  
Is cast out into the sun;  
Ceres smileth stern thereat,  
"We all now are desolate,  
Now Pan is dead."

## XVI.

Aphrodite! dead and driven  
As thy native foam, thou art;  
With the cestus long done heaving  
On the white calm of thine heart.  
*At Adonis!* at that shriek  
Not a tear runs down her cheek.  
Pan, Pan, is dead.

## XVII.

And the Loves, we used to know from  
One another, huddled lie,  
Frore as taken in a snow-storm,  
Close beside her tenderly,  
As if each had weakly tried  
Once to kiss her as he died.  
Pan, Pan, is dead.

## XVIII.

What, and Hermes? Time inthrall-  
eth  
All thy cunning, Hermes, thus,  
And the ivy blindly crawleth  
Round thy brave caduceus?  
Hast thou no new message for us,  
Full of thunder and Jove-glories?  
Nay, Pan is dead.

## XIX.

Crownèd Cybele's great turret  
Rocks and crumbles on her head;  
Roar the lions of her chariot  
Toward the wilderness, unfed:  
Scornful children are not mute, —  
"Mother, mother, walk afoot,  
Since Pan is dead!"

## XX.

In the fiery-hearted centre  
Of the solemn universe,  
Ancient Vesta, who could enter  
To consume thee with this curse?  
Drop thy gray chin on thy knee,  
O thou palsied Mystery!  
For Pan is dead.

## XXI.

Gods, we vainly do adjure you,  
Ye return nor voice nor sign!  
Not a votary could secure you  
Even a grave for your Divine, —  
Not a grave, to show thereby,  
*Here these gray old gods do lie.*  
Pan, Pan, is dead.

## XXII.

Even that Greece who took your  
wages  
Calls the obolus outworn;  
And the hoarse deep-throated ages  
Laugh your godships unto scorn;  
And the poets do disclaim you,  
Or grow colder if they name you —  
And Pan is dead.

## XXIII.

Gods bereavèd, gods belated,  
With your purples rent asunder,  
Gods discrowned and desecrated,  
Disinherited of thunder,  
Now the goats may climb and crop  
The soft grass on Ida's top—  
Now Pan is dead.

## XXIV.

Calm, of old, the bark went onward,  
When a cry more loud than wind,  
Rose up, deepened, and swept sun-  
ward,  
From the pilèd Dark behind;  
And the sun shrank, and grew pale,  
Breathed against by the great wail—  
"Pan, Pan, is dead."

## XXV.

And the rowers from the benches  
Fell, each shuddering on his face,  
While departing Influences  
Struck a cold back through the place;  
And the shadow of the ship  
Reeled along the passive deep—  
"Pan, Pan, is dead."

## XXVI.

And that dismal cry rose slowly  
And sank slowly through the air,  
Full of spirit's melancholy  
And eternity's despair!  
And they heard the words it said—  
PAN IS DEAD—GREAT PAN IS DEAD—  
PAN, PAN, IS DEAD.

## XXVII.

'Twas the hour when One in Sion  
Hung for love's sake on a cross;  
When his brow was chill with dying,  
And his soul was faint with loss;  
When his priestly blood dropped  
downward,  
And his kingly eyes looked throne-  
ward—  
Then Pan was dead.

## XXVIII.

By the love he stood alone in,  
His sole Godhead rose complete,  
And the false gods fell down moan-  
ing,

Each from off his golden seat;  
All the false gods with a cry  
Rendered up their deity—  
Pan, Pan, was dead.

## XXIX.

Wailing wide across the islands,  
They rent, vest-like, their Divine;  
And a darkness and a silence  
Quenched the light of every shrine;  
And Dodona's oak swang lonely,  
Henceforth, to the tempest only,  
Pan, Pan, was dead.

## XXX.

Pythia staggered, feeling o'er her  
Her lost god's forsaking look;  
Straight her eyeballs filmed with hor-  
ror,  
And her crispy fillets shook,  
And her lips gasped through their  
foam,  
For a word that did not come.  
Pan, Pan, was dead.

## XXXI.

O ye vain, false gods of Hellas,  
Ye are silent evermore;  
And I dash down this old chalice  
Whence libations ran of yore.  
See, the wine crawls in the dust  
Wormlike—as your glories must,  
Since Pan is dead.

## XXXII.

Get to dust as common mortals,  
By a common doom and track!  
Let no Schiller from the portals  
Of that Hades call you back,  
Or instruct us to weep all  
At your antique funeral.  
Pan, Pan, is dead,

## XXXIII.

By your beauty, which confesses  
Some chief beauty conquering you;  
By our grand heroic guesses  
Through your falsehood at the true,—  
We will weep *not!* earth shall roll  
Heir to each god's aureole—  
And Pan is dead.

## XXXIV.

Earth outgrows the mythic fancies  
Sung beside her in her youth,  
And those debonair romances  
Sound but dull beside the truth.  
Phœbus' chariot-course is run:  
Look up, poets, to the sun!  
Pan, Pan, is dead.

## XXXV.

Christ hath sent us down the angels;  
And the whole earth and the skies  
Are illumed by altar-candles  
Lit for blessed mysteries;  
And a priest's hand through creation  
Waveth calm and consecration —  
And Pan is dead.

## XXXVI.

Truth is fair: should we forego it?  
Can we sigh right for a wrong?  
God himself is the best Poet,  
And the real is his song.  
Sing his truth out fair and full,  
And secure his beautiful:  
Let Pan be dead.

## XXXVII.

Truth is large: our aspiration  
Scarce embraces half we be.  
Shame, to stand in his creation  
And doubt truth's sufficiency!  
To think God's song unexcelling  
The poor tales of our own telling —  
When Pan is dead.

## XXXVIII.

What is true and just and honest,  
What is lovely, what is pure,  
All of praise that hath admonisht,  
All of virtue shall endure, —  
These are themes for poets' uses,  
Stirring nobler than the Muses,  
Ere Pan was dead.

## XXXIX.

O brave poets, keep back nothing,  
Nor mix falsehood with the whole;  
Look up Godward; speak the truth in  
Worthy song from earnest soul:  
Hold in high poetic duty  
Truest truth the fairest beauty!  
Pan, Pan, is dead.

## A CHILD'S GRAVE AT FLORENCE.

A. A. E. C.

BORN JULY, 1848. DIED NOVEMBER, 1849.

## I.

OF English blood, of Tuscan birth,  
What country should we give her?  
Instead of any on the earth,  
The civic heavens receive her.

## II.

And here among the English tombs,  
In Tuscan ground we lay her,  
While the blue Tuscan sky endomes  
Our English words of prayer.

## III.

A little child! how long she lived,  
By months, not years, is reckoned:  
Born in one July, she survived  
Alone to see a second.

## IV.

Bright-featured, as the July sun  
Her little face still played in,  
And splendors, with her birth begun,  
Had had no time for fading.

## V.

So, LILY, from those July hours,  
No wonder we should call her:  
She looked such kinship to the flow-  
ers,  
Was but a little taller.

## VI.

A Tuscan Lily, — only white,  
As Dante, in abhorrence  
Of red corruption, wished aright  
The lilies of his Florence.

## VII.

We could not wish her whiter, — her  
Who perfumed with pure blossom  
The house, — a lovely thing to wear  
Upon a mother's bosom!

## VIII.

This July creature thought, perhaps,  
Our speech not worth assuming:  
She sate upon her parents' laps  
And mimicked the gnat's humming;

## IX.

Said "father," "mother," then left  
off,  
For tongues celestial fitter:  
Her hair had grown just long enough  
To catch heaven's jasper-glitter.

## X.

Babes! Love could always hear and  
see  
Behind the cloud that hid them:  
"Let little children come to me,  
And do not thou forbid them."

## XI.

So, unforbidding, have we met.  
And gently here have laid her,  
Though winter is no time to get  
The flowers that should o'erspread  
her.

## XII.

We should bring pansies quick with  
spring,  
Rose, violet, daffodilly,  
And also, above every thing,  
White lilies, for our Lily.

## XIII.

Nay, more than flowers, this grave  
exacts, —  
Glad, grateful attestations  
Of her sweet eyes and pretty acts,  
With calm renunciations.

## XIV.

Her very mother with light feet  
Should leave the place too earthy,  
Saying, "The angels have thee,  
sweet,  
Because we are not worthy."

## XV.

But winter kills the orange-buds,  
The gardens in the frost are;  
And all the heart dissolves in floods,  
Remembering we have lost her.

## XVI.

Poor earth, poor heart, too weak, too  
weak  
To miss the July shining!  
Poor heart! — what bitter words we  
speak  
When God speaks of resigning!

## XVII.

Sustain this heart in us that faints,  
Thou God, the self-existent!  
We catch up wild at parting saints,  
And feel thy heaven too distant.

## XVIII.

The wind that swept them out of sin  
Has ruffled all our vesture:  
On the shut door that let them in  
We beat with frantic gesture, —

## XIX.

To us, us also, open straight!  
The outer life is chilly:  
Are *we*, too, like the earth, to wait  
Till next year for our Lily?

## XX.

— Oh, my own baby on my knees,  
My leaping, dimpled treasure,  
At every word I write like these,  
Clasped close with stronger pres-  
sure!

## XXI.

Too well my own heart understands,  
At every word beats fuller —  
My little feet, my little hands,  
And hair of Lily's color!

## XXII.

But God gives patience; love learns  
strength,  
And faith remembers promise,  
And hope itself can smile at length  
On other hopes gone from us.

## XXIII.

Love, strong as death, shall conquer  
death,  
Through struggle made more glori-  
ous:  
This mother stills her sobbing breath,  
Renouncing, yet victorious.

## XXIV.

Arms empty of her child she lifts  
With spirit unbereaven, —  
"God will not all take back his gifts:  
My Lily's mine in heaven.

## XXV.

"Still mine! maternal rights serene  
Not given to another!  
The crystal bars shine faint between  
The souls of child and mother.

## XXVI.

"Meanwhile," the mother cries,  
"content!  
Our love was well divided:  
Its sweetness following where she  
went,  
Its anguish staid where I did.

## XXVII.

"Well done of God, to halve the lot,  
And give her all the sweetness;  
To us, the empty room and cot;  
To her, the heaven's completeness.

## XXVIII.

"To us, this grave; to her, the rows  
The mystic palm-trees spring in;  
To us, the silence in the house;  
To her, the choral singing.

## XXIX.

"For her, to gladden in God's view;  
For us, to hope and bear on.  
Grow, Lily, in thy garden new,  
Beside the Rose of Sharon!

## XXX.

"Grow fast in heaven, sweet Lily  
clipped,  
In love more calm than this is,  
And may the angels dewy-lipped  
Remind thee of our kisses!

## XXXI.

"While none shall tell thee of our  
tears,—  
These human tears now falling,  
Till, after a few patient years,  
One home shall take us all in.

## XXXII.

"Child, father, mother — who left  
out?  
Not mother, and not father!  
And when, our dying couch about,  
The natural mists shall gather,

## XXXIII.

"Some smiling angel close shall stand  
In old Correggio's fashion,  
And bear a LILY in his hand,  
For death's ANNUNCIATION."

## CATARINA TO CAMOENS;

DYING IN HIS ABSENCE ABROAD, AND REFERRING TO THE POEM IN WHICH HE RECORDED THE SWEETNESS OF HER EYES.

## I.

On the door you will not enter  
I have gazed too long: adieu!  
Hope withdraws her peradventure;  
Death is near me, and not *you*.  
Come, O lover,  
Close and cover

These poor eyes you called, I ween,  
"Sweetest eyes were ever seen!"

## II.

When I heard you sing that burden  
In my vernal days and bowers,  
Other praises disregarding,  
I but hearkened that of yours,  
Only saying  
In heart-playing,  
"Blessed eyes mine eyes have been,  
If the sweetest mine have seen!"

## III.

But all changes. At this vesper  
Cold the sun shines down the door.  
If you stood there, would you whisper,  
"Love, I love you." as before,  
Death pervading  
Now, and shading  
Eyes you sang of, that yestreen,  
As the sweetest ever seen?

## IV.

Yes. I think, were you beside them,  
Near the bed I die upon,  
Though their beauty you denied them,  
As you stood there, looking down,  
You would truly  
Call them duly,  
For the love's sake found therein,  
"Sweetest eyes were ever seen."

## V.

And if *you* looked down upon them,  
And if *they* looked up to *you*,  
All the light which has foregone them  
Would be gathered back anew:  
They would truly  
Be as duly  
Love-transformed to beauty's sheen,  
"Sweetest eyes were ever seen."

## VI.

But, ah me ! you only see me,  
 In your thoughts of loving man,  
 Smiling soft, perhaps, and dreamy,  
 Through the wavings of my fan;  
 And unweeting  
 Go repeating  
 In your revery serene,  
 "Sweetest eyes were ever seen,"

## VII.

While my spirit leans and reaches  
 From my body still and pale,  
 Fain to hear what tender speech is  
 In your love to help my bale.  
 O my poet,  
 Come and show it !  
 Come, of latest love, to glean,  
 "Sweetest eyes were ever seen."

## VIII.

O my poet, O my prophet !  
 When you praised their sweetness  
 so,  
 Did you think, in singing of it,  
 That it might be near to go ?  
 Had you fancies  
 From their glances,  
 That the grave would quickly screen  
 "Sweetest eyes were ever seen" ?

## IX.

No reply. The fountain's warble  
 In the courtyard sounds alone.  
 As the water to the marble  
 So my heart falls with a moan  
 From love-sighing  
 To this dying.  
 Death forerunneth Love to win  
 "Sweetest eyes were ever seen."

## X.

Will you come ? When I'm departed  
 Where all sweetnesses are hid,  
 Where thy voice, my tender-hearted,  
 Will not lift up either lid,  
 Cry, O lover,  
 Love is over !  
 Cry, beneath the cypress green,  
 "Sweetest eyes were ever seen !"

## XI.

When the angelus is ringing,  
 Near the convent will you walk,  
 And recall the choral singing,  
 Which brought angels down our  
 talk ?

Spirit-shriven  
 I viewed heaven,  
 Till you smiled — "Is earth unclean,  
 Sweetest eyes were ever seen ?"

## XII.

When beneath the palace-lattice  
 You ride slow as you have done,  
 And you see a face there that is  
 Not the old familiar one,  
 Will you oftly  
 Murmur softly,  
 "Here ye watched me morn and e'en,  
 Sweetest eyes were ever seen" ?

## XIII.

When the palace-ladies, sitting  
 Round your gittern, shall have said,  
 "Poet, sing those verses written  
 For the lady who is dead,"  
 Will you tremble,  
 Yet dissemble,  
 Or sing hoarse, with tears between,  
 "Sweetest eyes were ever seen" ?

## XIV.

"Sweetest eyes !" How sweet in  
 flowings  
 The repeated cadence is !  
 Though you sang a hundred poems,  
 Still the best one would be this.  
 I can hear it  
 "Twixt my spirit  
 And the earth-noise intervene, —  
 "Sweetest eyes were ever seen !"

## XV.

But the priest waits for the praying,  
 And the choir are on their knees,  
 And the soul must pass away in  
 Strains more solemn-high than  
 these.  
*Miserere*  
 For the weary !  
 Oh, no longer for Catrine  
 "Sweetest eyes were ever seen !"

## XVI.

Keep my riband, take and keep it,  
 (I have loosed it from my hair)<sup>1</sup>  
 Feeling, while you overweep it,  
 Not alone in your despair,  
 Since with saintly  
 Watch unfaintly,  
 Out of heaven shall o'er you lean  
 "Sweetest eyes were ever seen."

<sup>1</sup> She left him the riband from her hair.



## XVII.

But — but *now* — yet unremoved  
Up to heaven they glisten fast;  
You may east away, beloved,  
In your future all my past:  
Such old phrases  
May be praises  
For some fairer bosom-queen —  
“ Sweetest eyes were ever seen! ”

## XVIII.

Eyes of mine, what are ye doing?  
Faithless, faithless, praised amiss  
If a tear be of your showing,  
Dropt for any hope of HIS!  
Death has boldness  
Besides coldness  
If unworthy tears demean  
“ Sweetest eyes were ever seen.”

## XIX.

I will look out to his future;  
I will bless it till it shine.  
Should he ever be a suitor  
Unto sweeter eyes than mine,  
Sunshine gild them,  
Angels shield them,  
Whatsoever eyes terrene  
*Be* the sweetest HIS have seen.

## LIFE AND LOVE.

## I.

FAST this Life of mine was dying,  
Blind already, and calm as death,  
Snowflakes on her bosom lying  
Sarcely heaving with her breath.

## II.

Love came by, and having known her  
In a dream of fabled lands,  
Gently stooped, and laid upon her  
Mystic chrism of holy hands;

## III.

Drew his smile across her folded  
Eyelids, as the swallow dips;  
Breathed as finely as the cold did,  
Through the locking of her lips.

## IV.

So, when Life looked upward, being  
Warmed and breathed on from  
above,  
What sight could she have for seeing,  
Evermore . . . but only LOVE?

## A DENIAL.

## I.

We have met late — it is too late to  
meet,  
O friend, not more than friend!  
Death's forecome shroud is tangled  
round my feet,  
And if I step or stir, I touch the end.  
In this last jeopardy  
Can I approach thee, I, who cannot  
move?  
How shall I answer thy request for  
love?  
Look in my face, and see.

## II.

I love thee not, I dare not love thee!  
go  
In silence; drop my hand.  
If thou seek roses, seek them where  
they blow  
In garden-alleys, not in desert sand.  
Can life and death agree,  
That thou shouldst stoop thy song to  
my complaint?  
I cannot love thee. If the word is  
faint,  
Look in my face, and see.

## III.

I might have loved thee in some for-  
mer days.  
Oh, then my spirits had leapt  
As now they sink, at hearing thy love-  
praise!  
Before these faded cheeks were over-  
wept,  
Had this been asked of me,  
To love thee with my whole strong  
heart and head,  
I should have said still . . . yes, but  
*smiled* and said,  
“ Look in my face, and see! ”

## IV.

But now . . . God sees me, — God,  
 who took my heart,  
 And drowned it in life's surge.  
 In all your wide, warm earth I have  
 no part —  
 A light song overcomes me like a  
 dirge.  
 Could Love's great harmony  
 The saints keep step to when their  
 bonds are loose.  
 Not weigh me down? am I a wife to  
 choose?  
 Look in my face, and see —

## V.

While I behold, as plain as one who  
 dreams,  
 Some woman of full worth,  
 Whose voice, as cadenced as a silver  
 stream's,  
 Shall prove the fountain-soul which  
 sends it forth;  
 One younger, more thought-free  
 And fair and gay, than I, thou must  
 forget,  
 With brighter eyes than these . . .  
 which are not wet . . .  
 Look in my face, and see.

## VI.

So farewell, thou whom I have known  
 too late  
 To let thee come so near.  
 Be counted happy, while men call  
 thee great,  
 And one beloved woman feels thee  
 dear! —  
 Not I! — that cannot be.  
 I am lost, I am changed: I must go  
 farther, where  
 The change shall take me worse, and  
 no one dare  
 Look in my face, and see.

## VII.

Meantime I bless thee. By these  
 thoughts of mine  
 I bless thee from all such!  
 I bless thy lamp to oil, thy cup to  
 wine,  
 Thy hearth to joy, thy hand to an  
 equal touch  
 Of loyal troth. For me,  
 I love thee not, I love thee not! —  
 away!  
 Here's no more courage in my soul  
 to say,  
 "Look in my face, and see."

## PROOF AND DISPROOF.

## I.

Dost thou love me, my beloved?  
 Who shall answer yes or no?  
 What is provèd or disprovèd  
 When my soul inquireth so,  
 Dost thou love me, my beloved?

## II.

I have seen thy heart to-day,  
 Never open to the crowd,  
 While to love me aye and aye  
 Was the vow as it was vowed  
 By thine eyes of steadfast gray.

## III.

Now I sit alone, alone —  
 And the hot tears break and burn  
 Now, beloved, thou art gone,  
 Doubt and terror have their turn.  
 Is it love that I have known.

## IV.

I have known some bitter things, —  
 Anguish, anger, solitude.  
 Year by year an evil brings,  
 Year by year denies a good;  
 March winds violate my springs.

## V.

I have known how sickness bends,  
 I have known how sorrow breaks;  
 How quick hopes have sudden ends,  
 How the heart thinks till it aches  
 Of the smile of buried friends.

## VI.

Last, I have known *thee*, my brave  
 Noble thinker, lover, doer!  
 The best knowledge last I have;  
 But thou comest as the thrower  
 Of fresh flowers upon a grave.

## VII.

Count what feelings used to move me!  
 Can this love assort with those?  
 Thou, who art so far above me,  
 Wilt thou stoop so for repose?  
 Is it true that thou canst love me?

## VIII.

Do not blame me if I doubt thee.  
 I can call love by its name  
 When thine arm is wrapt about me;  
 But even love seems not the same  
 When I sit alone without thee.

## IX.

In thy clear eyes I descried  
 Many a proof of love to-day;  
 But to-night, those unbelied  
 Speechful eyes being gone away  
 There's the proof to seek beside.

## X.

Dost thou love me, my beloved?  
 Only *thou* canst answer yes!  
 And, thou gone, the proof's disprovèd,  
 And the ery rings answerless, —  
 Dost thou love me, my beloved?

## QUESTION AND ANSWER.

## I.

LOVE you seek for presupposes  
 Summer heat and sunny glow.  
 Tell me, do you find moss-roses  
 Budding, blooming, in the snow?  
 Snow might kill the rose-tree's root:  
 Shake it quickly from your foot,  
 Lest it harm you as you go.

## II.

From the ivy, where it dapples  
 A gray ruin, stone by stone,  
 Do you look for grapes or apples,  
 Or for sad green leaves alone?  
 Pluck the leaves off, two or three;  
 Keep them for morality  
 When you shall be safe and gone.

## INCLUSIONS.

## I.

Oh, wilt thou have my hand, dear, to  
 lie along in thine?  
 As a little stone in a running stream,  
 it seems to lie and pine.  
 Now drop the poor, pale hand, dear,  
 unfit to plight with thine.

## II.

Oh, wilt thou have my cheek, dear,  
 drawn closer to thine own?  
 My cheek is white, my cheek is worn  
 by many a tear run down.  
 Now leave a little space, dear, lest it  
 should wet thine own.

## III.

Oh, must thou have my soul, dear,  
 commingled with thy soul?  
 Red grows the cheek, and warm the  
 hand; the part is in the whole:  
 Nor hands nor cheeks keep separate,  
 when soul is joined to soul.

## INSUFFICIENCY.

## I.

THERE is no one beside thee, and no  
 one above thee;  
 Thou standest alone, as the nightin-  
 gale sings!  
 And my words that would praise  
 thee are impotent things,  
 For none can express thee, though all  
 should approve thee.  
 I love thee so, dear, that I only can  
 love thee.

## II.

Say, what can I do for thee? Weary  
 thee, grieve thee?  
 Lean on thy shoulder, new burdens  
 to add?  
 Weep my tears over thee, making  
 thee sad?  
 Oh, hold me not, love me not! let me  
 retrieve thee.  
 I love thee so, dear, that I only can  
 leave thee.

SONNETS FROM THE  
PORTUGUESE.

## I.

I THOUGHT once how Theocritus had  
 sung  
 Of the sweet years, the dear and  
 wished-for years,  
 Who each one in a gracious hand ap-  
 pears  
 To bear a gift for mortals, old or  
 young;  
 And, as I mused it in his antique  
 tongue,  
 I saw in gradual vision, through my  
 tears,  
 The sweet, sad years, the melancholy  
 years,  
 Those of my own life, who by turns  
 had flung  
 A shadow across me. Straightway I  
 was 'ware,  
 So weeping, how a mystic shape did  
 move  
 Behind me, and drew me backward  
 by the hair;  
 And a voice said in mastery, while I  
 strove,  
 "Guess now who holds thee?" —  
 "Death," I said. But there  
 The silver answer rang, "Not  
 Death, but Love."

## II.

BUT only three in all God's universe  
 Have heard this word thou hast said,  
 —Himself, beside  
 Thee speaking, and me listening! and  
 replied  
 One of us . . . *that* was God . . . and  
 laid the curse  
 So darkly on my eyelids as to amerce  
 My sight from seeing thee, — that if I  
 had died,  
 The death-weights placed there would  
 have signified  
 Less absolute exclusion. "Nay," is  
 worse  
 From God than from all others, O my  
 friend!  
 Men could not part us with their  
 worldly jars,  
 Nor the seas change us, nor the tem-  
 pests bend;  
 Our hands would touch for all the  
 mountain-bars:

And, heaven being rolled between us  
 at the end,  
 We should but vow the faster for the  
 stars.

## III.

UNLIKE are we, unlike, O princely  
 Heart!  
 Unlike our uses and our destinies.  
 Our ministering two angels look sur-  
 prise  
 On one another as they strike athwart  
 Their wings in passing. Thou, be-  
 think thee, art  
 A guest for queens to social pagean-  
 tries,  
 With gages from a hundred brighter  
 eyes  
 Than tears even can make mine, to  
 play thy part  
 Of chief musician. What hast *thou*  
 to do  
 With looking from the lattice-lights at  
 me,  
 A poor, tired, wandering singer, sing-  
 ing through  
 The dark, and leaning up a cypress-  
 tree?  
 The chrism is on thine head; on  
 mine the dew:  
 And Death must dig the level where  
 these agree.

## IV.

THOU hast thy calling to some pal-  
 ace-floor,  
 Most gracious singer of high poems,  
 where  
 The dancers will break footing, from  
 the care  
 Of watching up thy pregnant lips for  
 more.  
 And dost thou lift this house's latch  
 too poor  
 For hand of thine? and canst thou  
 think, and bear  
 To let thy music drop here unaware  
 In folds of golden fulness at my door?  
 Look up, and see the casement broken  
 in,  
 The bats and owlets builders in the  
 roof!  
 My cricket chirps against thy mando-  
 lin.  
 Hush, call no echo up in further  
 proof  
 Of desolation! there's a voice within  
 That weeps . . . as thou must sing  
 . . . alone, aloof.

## v.

I LIFT my heavy heart up solemnly,  
 As once Electra her sepulchral urn,  
 And, looking in thine eyes, I over-  
 turn  
 The ashes at thy feet. Behold and  
 see  
 What a great heap of grief lay hid in  
 me,  
 And how the red wild sparkles dimly  
 burn  
 Through the ashen grayness If thy  
 foot in scorn  
 Could tread them out to darkness  
 utterly,  
 It might be well, perhaps But if, in-  
 stead,  
 Thou wait beside me for the wind to  
 blow  
 The gray dust up . . . those laurels  
 on thine head,  
 O my beloved, will not shield thee so,  
 That none of all the fires shall scorch  
 and shred  
 The hair beneath. Stand farther off,  
 then! Go.

## vi

Go from me Yet I feel that I shall  
 stand  
 Henceforward in thy shadow. Never-  
 more  
 Alone upon the threshold of my door  
 Of individual life, I shall command  
 The uses of my soul, nor lift my hand  
 Serenely in the sunshine as before,  
 Without the sense of that which I  
 forbore, —  
 Thy touch upon the palm The  
 widest land  
 Doom takes to part us leaves thy  
 heart in mine  
 With pulses that beat double. What  
 I do  
 And what I dream include thee, as  
 the wine  
 Must taste of its own grapes And,  
 when I sue  
 God for myself, he hears that name of  
 thine,  
 And sees within my eyes the tears of  
 two.

## vii.

THE face of all the world is changed,  
 I think,  
 Since first I heard the footsteps of thy  
 soul  
 Move still, oh, still, beside me as they  
 stole

Betwixt me and the dreadful outer  
 brink  
 Of obvious death, where I, who  
 thought to sink,  
 Was caught up into love, and taught  
 the whole  
 Of life in a new rhythm. The cup of  
 dole  
 God gave for baptism, I am fain to  
 drink,  
 And praise its sweetness, sweet, with  
 thee anear.  
 The names of country, heaven, are  
 changed away  
 For where thou art or shalt be, there  
 or here;  
 And this . . . this lute and song . . .  
 loved yesterday,  
 (The singing angels know) are only  
 dear  
 Because thy name moves right in  
 what they say.

## viii.

WHAT can I give thee back, O liberal  
 And princely giver, who hast brought  
 the gold  
 And purple of thine heart, unstained,  
 untold,  
 And laid them on the outside of the  
 wall  
 For such as I to take or leave withal,  
 In unexpected largesse? Am I cold,  
 Ungrateful, that, for these most mani-  
 fold  
 High gifts, I render nothing back at  
 all?  
 Not so; not cold, but very poor in-  
 stead.  
 Ask God, who knows For frequent  
 tears have run  
 The colors from my life, and left so  
 dead  
 And pale a stuff, it were not fitly  
 done  
 To give the same as pillow to thy  
 head.  
 Go farther! let it serve to trample on.

## ix.

CAN it be right to give what I can  
 give?  
 To let thee sit beneath the fall of  
 tears  
 As salt as mine, and hear the sighing  
 years  
 Re-sighing on my lips renunciative  
 Through those infrequent smiles  
 which fail to live

For all thy adjurations? Oh, my fears,  
That this can scarce be right! We are not peers,  
So to be lovers, and I own and grieve  
That givers of such gifts as mine are must  
Be counted with the ungenerous. Out, alas!  
I will not soil thy purple with my dust,  
Nor breathe my poison on thy Venice-glass,  
Nor give thee any love — which were unjust.  
Beloved, I only love thee! let it pass.

## X

YET love, mere love, is beautiful indeed,  
And worthy of acceptance. Fire is bright,  
Let temple burn, or flax: an equal light  
Leaps in the flame from cedar-plank or weed:  
And love is fire. And when I say at need  
*I love thee . . . mark! . . . I love thee*  
— in thy sight  
I stand transfigured, glorified aright,  
With conscience of the new rays that proceed  
Out of my face toward thine. There's nothing low  
In love, when love the lowest: meanest creatures  
Who love God, God accepts while loving so.  
And what I *feel*, across the inferior features  
Of what I *am*, doth flash itself, and show  
How that great work of love enhances Nature's.

## XI.

AND therefore, if to love can be desert,  
I am not all unworthy. Cheeks as pale  
As these you see, and trembling knees that fail  
To bear the burden of a heavy heart;  
This weary minstrel-life that once was girt  
To climb Aornus, and can scarce avail

To pipe now 'gainst the valley night-  
ingale  
A melancholy music, — why advert  
To these things? O beloved, it is plain  
I am not of thy worth, nor for thy place!  
And yet, because I love thee, I obtain  
From that same love this vindicating grace,  
To live on still in love, and yet in vain, —  
To bless thee, yet renounce thee to thy face.

## XII.

INDEED, this very love which is my boast,  
And which, when rising up from breast to brow,  
Doth crown me with a ruby large enow  
To draw men's eyes, and prove the inner cost, —  
This love even, all my worth, to the uttermost,  
I should not love withal, unless that thou  
Hadst set me an example, shown me how,  
When first thine earnest eyes with mine were crosst,  
And love called love. And thus I cannot speak  
Of love even, as a good thing of my own;  
Thy soul hath snatched up mine all faint and weak,  
And placed it by thee on a golden throne, —  
And that I love (O soul! we must be meek)  
Is by thee only, whom I love alone.

## XIII.

AND wilt thou have me fashion into speech  
The love I bear thee, finding words enough,  
And hold the torch out, while the winds are rough,  
Between our faces, to cast light on each?  
I drop it at thy feet. I cannot teach  
My hand to hold my spirit so far off  
From myself — me — that I should bring thee proof

In words of love hid in me out of reach.  
 Nay, let the silence of my womanhood  
 Commend my woman-love to thy belief,  
 Seeing that I stand unwon, however wooed,  
 And rend the garment of my life, in brief,  
 By a most dauntless, voiceless fortitude,  
 Lest one touch of this heart convey its grief

## XIV.

If thou must love me, let it be for nought  
 Except for love's sake only. Do not say  
 "I love her for her smile, her look,  
 her way  
 Of speaking gently, for a trick of thought  
 That falls in well with mine, and certes brought  
 A sense of pleasant ease on such a day;"  
 For these things in themselves, beloved, may  
 Be changed, or change for thee: and love so wrought  
 May be unwrought so. Neither love me for  
 Thine own dear pity's wiping my cheeks dry:  
 A creature might forget to weep, who bore  
 Thy comfort long, and lose thy love thereby.  
 But love me for love's sake, that evermore  
 Thou mayst love on through love's eternity.

## XV.

Accuse me not, beseech thee, that I wear  
 Too calm and sad a face in front of thine;  
 For we two look two ways, and cannot shine  
 With the same sunlight on our brow and hair.  
 On me thou lookest with no doubting care,  
 As on a bee shut in a crystalline;  
 Since sorrow hath shut me safe in love's divine,

And to spread wing, and fly in the outer air,  
 Were most impossible failure, if I strove  
 To fail so. But I look on thee, on thee,  
 Beholding, besides love, the end of love,  
 Hearing oblivion beyond memory;  
 As one who sits and gazes from above,  
 Over the rivers to the bitter sea.

## XVI.

AND yet, because thou overcomest so,  
 Because thou art more noble, and like a king,  
 Thou canst prevail against my fears, and fling  
 Thy purple round me; till my heart shall grow  
 Too close against thine heart henceforth to know  
 How it shook when alone. Why, conquering  
 May prove as lordly and complete a thing  
 In lifting upward as in crushing low!  
 And, as a vanquished soldier yields his sword  
 To one who lifts him from the bloody earth,  
 Even so, beloved, I at last record,  
 Here ends my strife. If thou invite me forth,  
 I rise above abasement at the word.  
 Make thy love larger to enlarge my worth.

## XVII.

My poet, thou canst touch on all the notes  
 God set between his After and Before,  
 And strike up and strike off the general roar  
 Of the rushing worlds a melody that floats  
 In a serene air purely. Antidotes  
 Of medicated music, answering for  
 Mankind's forlornest uses, thou canst pour  
 From thence into their ears. God's will devotes  
 Thine to such ends, and mine to wait on thine.  
 How, dearest, wilt thou have me for most use? —  
 A hope to sing by gladly, or a fine  
 Sad memory, with thy songs to interfuse?

A shade, in which to sing, of palm  
or pine?  
A grave, on which to rest from sing-  
ing? Choose

## XVIII.

I NEVER gave a lock of hair away  
To a man, dearest, except this to  
thee,  
Which now upon my fingers thought-  
fully  
I ring out to the full brown length,  
and say  
"Take it." My day of youth went  
yesterday.  
My hair no longer bounds to my foot's  
glee,  
Nor plant I it from rose or myrtle-  
tree,  
As girls do, any more: it only may  
Now shade on two pale cheeks the  
mark of tears,  
Taught drooping from the head that  
hangs aside  
Through sorrow's trick. I thought  
the funeral-shears  
Would take this first; but love is jus-  
tified, —  
Take it thou, finding pure, from all  
those years,  
The kiss my mother left here when  
she died.

## XIX.

THE soul's Rialto hath its merchan-  
dise:  
I barter curl for curl upon that mart,  
And from my poet's forehead to my  
heart  
Receive this lock, which outweighs ar-  
gosies, —  
As purple black as erst to Pindar's  
eyes  
The dim purpureal tresses gloomed  
athwart  
The nine white Muse-brows. For this  
counterpart, . . .  
The bay-crown's shade, beloved, I  
surmise,  
Still lingers on thy curl, it is so  
black.  
Thus, with a fillet of smooth-kissing  
breath,  
I tie the shadows safe from gliding  
back,  
And lay the gift where nothing hin-  
dereth;

Here on my heart, as on thy brow, to  
lack  
No natural heat till mine grows cold  
in death.

## XX.

BELOVÈD, my beloved, when I think  
That thou wast in the world a year  
ago,  
What time I sate alone here in the  
snow,  
And saw no footprint, heard the si-  
lence sink  
No moment at thy voice, but, link by  
link,  
Went counting all my chains as if that  
so  
They never could fall off at any blow  
Struck by thy possible hand, — why,  
thus I drink  
Of life's great cup of wonder! Won-  
derful,  
Never to feel thee thrill the day or  
night  
With personal act or speech, nor  
ever cull  
Some prescience of thee with the  
blossoms white  
Thou sawest growing! Atheists are  
as dull,  
Who cannot guess God's presence out  
of sight.

## XXI.

SAY over again, and yet once over  
again,  
That thou dost love me. Though the  
word repeated  
Should seem a "cuckoo-song," as  
thou dost treat it,  
Remember, never to the hill or plain,  
Valley and wood, without her cuckoo-  
strain  
Comes the fresh Spring in all her  
green completed.  
Belovèd, I, amid the darkness greeted  
By a doubtful spirit-voice, in that  
doubt's pain  
Cry, "Speak once more — thou lov-  
est!" Who can fear  
Too many stars, though each in heav-  
en shall roll,  
Too many flowers, though each shall  
crown the year?  
Say thou dost love me, love me, love  
me; toll  
The silver iterance, only minding,  
dear,  
To love me also in silence with thy  
soul.



## XXII.

WHEN our two souls stand up erect  
and strong,  
Face to face, silent, drawing nigh and  
nigher,  
Until the lengthening wings break  
into fire  
At either curvèd point, what bitter  
wrong  
Can the earth do to us, that we should  
not long  
Be here contented? Think. In  
mounting higher,  
The angels would press on us, and  
aspire  
To drop some golden orb of perfect  
song  
Into our deep, dear silence. Let us  
stay  
Rather on earth, belovèd, where the  
unfit  
Contrarious moods of men recoil  
away,  
And isolate pure spirits, and permit  
A place to stand and love in for a  
day,  
With darkness and the death-hour  
rounding it.

## XXIII.

Is it indeed so? If I lay here dead,  
Wouldst thou miss any life in losing  
mine?  
And would the sun for thee more  
coldly shine,  
Because of grave-damps falling round  
my head?  
I marvelled, my belovèd, when I  
read  
Thy thought so in the letter. I am  
thine—  
But . . . so much to thee? Can I  
pour thy wine  
While my hands tremble? Then my  
soul, instead  
Of dreams of death, resumes life's  
lower range.  
Then love me, Love! look on me,  
breathe on me!  
As brighter ladies do not count it  
strange,  
For love, to give up acres and de-  
gree,  
I yield the grave for thy sake, and  
exchange  
My near sweet view of heaven, for  
earth with thee!

## XXIV.

LET the world's sharpness, like a  
clasping knife,  
Shut in upon itself, and do no harm  
In this close hand of love, now soft  
and warm;  
And let us hear no sound of human  
strife  
After the click of the shutting. Life  
to life—  
I lean upon thee, dear, without  
alarm,  
And feel as safe as guarded by a  
charm  
Against the stab of worldlings, who,  
if rife,  
Are weak to injure. Very whitely  
still  
The lilies of our lives may re-assure  
Their blossoms from their roots, ac-  
cessible  
Alone to heavenly dews that drop  
not fewer;  
Growing straight, out of man's reach,  
on the hill.  
God only, who made us rich, can  
make us poor.

## XXV.

A HEAVY heart, belovèd, have I  
borne  
From year to year, until I saw thy  
face,  
And sorrow after sorrow took the  
place  
Of all those natural joys as lightly  
worn  
As the stringed pearls, each lifted in  
its turn  
By a beating heart at dance-time.  
Hopes apace  
Were changed to long despairs, till  
God's own grace  
Could scarcely lift above the world  
forlorn  
My heavy heart. Then *thou* didst bid  
me bring  
And let it drop adown thy calmly  
great  
Deep being. Fast it sinketh, as a  
thing  
Which its own nature doth precipi-  
tate,  
While thine doth close above it, me-  
diating  
Betwixt the stars and the unaccom-  
plished fate.

## XXVI.

I LIVED with visions for my company,  
 Instead of men and women, years  
 ago,  
 And found them gentle mates, nor  
 thought to know  
 A sweeter music than they played to  
 me.  
 But soon their trailing purple was  
 not free  
 Of this world's dust, their lutes did  
 silent grow,  
 And I myself grew faint and blind  
 below  
 Their vanishing eyes. Then THOU  
 didst come — to be,  
 Belovèd, what they seemed. Their  
 shining fronts,  
 Their songs, their splendors (better,  
 yet the same,  
 As river-water hallowed into fountains,  
 Met in thee, and from out thee over-  
 came  
 My soul with satisfaction of all  
 wants,  
 Because God's gifts put man's best  
 dreams to shame.

## XXVII.

My own belovèd, who hast lifted  
 me  
 From this drear flat of earth where I  
 was thrown,  
 And, in betwixt the languid ringlets,  
 blown  
 A life-breath, till the forehead hope-  
 fully  
 Shines out again, as all the angels  
 see,  
 Before thy saving kiss! My own, my  
 own,  
 Who camest to me when the world  
 was gone,  
 And I, who looked for only God,  
 found thee!  
 I find thee; I am safe and strong  
 and glad.  
 As one who stands in dewless aspho-  
 del  
 Looks backward on the tedious time  
 he had  
 In the upper-life, so I, with bosom-  
 swell,  
 Make witness here, between the good  
 and bad,  
 That love, as strong as death, re-  
 trieves as well.

## XXVIII.

My letters! all dead paper, mute and  
 white!  
 And yet they seem alive, and quiver-  
 ing  
 Against my tremulous hands which  
 loose the string,  
 And let them drop down on my knee  
 to-night.  
 This said, he wished to have me in  
 his sight  
 Once, as a friend; this fixed a day in  
 spring  
 To come and touch my hand . . . a  
 simple thing,  
 Yet I wept for it; this . . . the pa-  
 per's light . . .  
 Said, *Dear, I love thee*; and I sank  
 and quailed  
 As if God's future thundered on my  
 past.  
 This said, *I am thine*, and so its ink  
 has paled  
 With lying at my heart that beat too  
 fast;  
 And this . . . O love, thy words have  
 ill availed  
 If what this said I dared repeat at  
 last!

## XXIX.

I THINK of thee!—my thoughts do  
 twine and bud  
 About thee, as wild vines about a  
 tree  
 Put out broad leaves, and soon there's  
 nought to see  
 Except the straggling green which  
 hides the wood.  
 Yet, O my palm-tree! be it under-  
 stood  
 I will not have my thoughts instead  
 of thee  
 Who art dearer, better. Rather, in-  
 stantly  
 Renew thy presence: as a strong tree  
 should,  
 Rustle thy boughs and set thy trunk  
 all bare,  
 And let these bands of greenery which  
 ensphere thee  
 Drop heavily down, burst, shattered,  
 everywhere!  
 Because, in this deep joy to see and  
 hear thee,  
 And breathe within thy shadow a  
 new air,  
 I do not think of thee—I am too  
 near thee.

## XXX.

I SEE thine image through my tears  
to-night,  
And yet to-day I saw thee smiling.  
How  
Refer the cause? Belovèd, is it thou  
Or I who makes me sad? The acolyte,  
Amid the chanted joy and thankful  
rite,  
May so fall flat, with pale insensate  
brow,  
On the altar-stair. I hear thy voice  
and vow,  
Perplexed, uncertain, since thou art  
out of sight,  
As he, in his swooning ears, the  
choir's amen.  
Belovèd, dost thou love? or did I see  
all  
The glory as I dreamed, and fainted  
when  
Too vehement light dilated my ideal,  
For my soul's eyes? Will that light  
come again,  
As now these tears come falling hot  
and real?

## XXXI.

THOU comest! all is said without a  
word.  
I sit beneath thy looks, as children  
do  
In the noon sun, with souls that  
tremble through  
Their happy eyelids from an un-  
averred  
Yet prodigal inward joy. Behold,  
I erred  
In that last doubt! and yet I cannot  
rue  
The sin most, but the occasion, — that  
we two  
Should for a moment stand unmin-  
istered  
By a mutual presence. Ah, keep  
near and close,  
Thou dove-like help! and, when my  
fears would rise,  
With thy broad heart serenely inter-  
pose:  
Brood down with thy divine suffi-  
ciencies  
These thoughts which tremble when  
bereft of those,  
Like callow birds left desert to the  
skies.

## XXXII.

THE first time that the sun rose on  
thine oath  
To love me, I looked forward to the  
moon  
To slacken all those bonds which  
seemed too soon  
And quickly tied to make a lasting  
troth.  
Quick-loving hearts, I thought, may  
quickly loathe;  
And, looking on myself, I seemed  
not one  
For such man's love! — more like an  
out-of-tune  
Worn viol a good singer would be  
wroth  
To spoil his song with, and which,  
snatched in haste,  
Is laid down at the first ill-sounding  
note.  
I did not wrong myself so; but I  
placed  
A wrong on *thee*. For perfect strains  
may float  
'Neath master-hands, from instru-  
ments defaced,  
And great souls at one stroke may do  
and dote.

## XXXIII.

YES, call me by my pet name! let me  
hear  
The name I used to run at, when a  
child,  
From innocent play, and leave the  
cowslips piled,  
To glance up in some face that proved  
me dear  
With the look of its eyes. I miss the  
clear  
Fond voices, which, being drawn and  
reconciled  
Into the music of heaven's undefiled,  
Call me no longer. Silence on the  
bier,  
While I call God — call God! So let  
thy mouth  
Be heir to those who are now exani-  
mate.  
Gather the north flowers to complete  
the south,  
And catch the early love up in the  
late.  
Yes, call me by that name, and I, in  
truth,  
With the same heart, will answer,  
and not wait.

## XXXIV.

WITH the same heart, I said, I'll answer thee  
 As those, when thou shalt call me by my name.  
 Lo, the vain promise! is the same, the same,  
 Perplexed and ruffled by life's strategy?  
 When called before, I told how hastily  
 I dropped my flowers, or brake off from a game,  
 To run and answer with the smile that came  
 At play last moment, and went on with me  
 Through my obedience. When I answer now,  
 I drop a grave thought, break from solitude:  
 Yet still my heart goes to thee; ponder how, —  
 Not as to a single good, but all my good!  
 Lay thy hand on it, best one, and allow  
 That no child's foot could run fast as this blood.

## XXXV.

IF I leave all for thee, wilt thou exchange,  
 And be all to me? Shall I never miss  
 Home-talk and blessing, and the common kiss  
 That comes to each in turn, nor count it strange,  
 When I lock up, to drop on a new range  
 Of walls and floors, — another home than this?  
 Nay, wilt thou fill that place by me which is  
 Filled by dead eyes too tender to know change?  
 That's hardest. If to conquer love has tried,  
 To conquer grief tries more, as all things prove;  
 For grief, indeed, is love and grief beside.  
 Alas! I have grieved so, I am hard to love.  
 Yet love me, wilt thou? Open thine heart wide,  
 And fold within the wet wings of thy dove.

## XXXVI.

WHEN we met first and loved, I did not build  
 Upon the event with marble. Could it mean  
 To last, — a love set pendulous between  
 Sorrow and sorrow? Nay, I rather thrilled,  
 Distrusting every light that seemed to gild  
 The onward path, and feared to overlean  
 A finger even. And, though I have grown serene  
 And strong since then, I think that God has willed  
 A still renewable fear . . . O love,  
 O troth . . .  
 Lest these enclaspèd hands should never hold,  
 This mutual kiss drop down between us both  
 As an unowned thing, once the lips being cold.  
 And Love, be false! if *he*, to keep one oath,  
 Must lose one joy, by his life's star foretold.

## XXXVII.

PARDON, oh, pardon, that my soul should make,  
 Of all that strong divineness which I know  
 For thine and thee, an image only so  
 Formed of the sand, and fit to shift and break.  
 It is that distant years which did not take  
 Thy sovranly, recoiling with a blow,  
 Have forced my swimming brain to undergo  
 Their doubt and dread, and blindly to forsake  
 Thy purity of likeness, and distort  
 Thy worthiest love to a worthless counterfeit:  
 As if a shipwrecked Pagan, safe in port,  
 His guardian sea-god to commemorate,  
 Should set a sculptured porpoise, gills a-snort  
 And vibrant tail, within the temple-gate.

## XXXVIII.

FIRST time he kissed me, he but only  
 kissed  
 The fingers of this hand wherewith I  
 write;  
 And ever since, it grew more clean  
 and white,  
 Slow to world-greetings, quick with  
 its "Oh list!"  
 When the angels speak. A ring of  
 amethyst  
 I could not wear here plainer to my  
 sight  
 Than that first kiss. The second  
 passed in height  
 The first, and sought the forehead,  
 and half missed,  
 Half falling on the hair. Oh beyond  
 need!  
 That was the chrism of love, which  
 love's own crown  
 With sanctifying sweetness did pre-  
 ce-de.  
 The third upon my lips was folded  
 down  
 In perfect purple state; since when,  
 indeed,  
 I have been proud and said, "My  
 love, my own."

## XXXIX.

BECAUSE thou hast the power, and  
 own'st the grace,  
 To look through and behind this mask  
 of me,  
 (Against which years have beat thus  
 blanchingly  
 With their rains), and behold my  
 soul's true face,  
 The dim and weary witness of life's  
 race;  
 Because thou hast the faith and love  
 to see,  
 Through that same soul's distracting  
 lethargy,  
 The patient angel waiting for a place  
 In the new heavens; because nor sin  
 nor woe,  
 Nor God's infliction, nor death's  
 neighborhood,  
 Nor all which others, viewing, turn to  
 go,  
 Nor all which makes me tired of all,  
 self-viewed, —  
 Nothing repels thee, . . . dearest,  
 teach me so  
 To pour out gratitude, as thou dost,  
 good!

## XL.

Our yes! they love through all this  
 world of ours!  
 I will not gainsay love, called love,  
 forsooth.  
 I have heard love talked in my early  
 youth,  
 And since, not so long back but that  
 the flowers  
 Then gathered smell still. Mussul-  
 mans and Giaours  
 Throw kerchiefs at a smile, and have  
 no ruth  
 For any weeping. Polypheme's white  
 tooth  
 Slips on the nut, if, after frequent  
 showers,  
 The shell is over-smooth; and not so  
 much  
 Will turn the thing called love aside  
 to hate,  
 Or else to oblivion. But thou art not  
 such  
 A lover, my beloved! thou canst  
 wait  
 Through sorrow and sickness, to bring  
 souls to touch,  
 And think it soon when others cry,  
 "Too late!"

## XLI.

I THANK all who have loved me in  
 their hearts,  
 With thanks and love from mine.  
 Deep thanks to all  
 Who paused a little near the prison-  
 wall  
 To, hear my music in its louder  
 parts,  
 Ere they went onward, each one to  
 the mart's  
 Or temple's occupation, beyond call.  
 But thou, who, in my voice's sink and  
 fall  
 When the sob took it, thy divinest  
 art's  
 Own instrument didst drop down at  
 thy foot  
 To hearken what I said between my  
 tears, . . .  
 Instruct me how to thank thee! Oh,  
 to shoot  
 My soul's full meaning into future  
 years,  
 That *they* should lend it utterance,  
 and salute  
 Love that endures, from Life that  
 disappears!

## XLII.

"*My future will not copy fair my past :*"  
 I wrote that once: and thinking at  
 my side  
 My ministering life-angel justified  
 The word by his appealing look up-  
 cast  
 To the white throne of God, I turned  
 at last,  
 And there, instead, saw thee, not un-  
 allied  
 To angels in thy soul. Then I, long  
 tried  
 By natural ills, received the comfort  
 fast;  
 While budding, at thy sight, my pil-  
 grim's staff  
 Gave out green leaves with morning  
 dews impearled.  
 I seek no copy now of life's first half:  
 Leave here the pages with long mus-  
 ing curled,  
 And write me new my future's epi-  
 graph, —  
 New angel mine, unhopèd for in the  
 world!

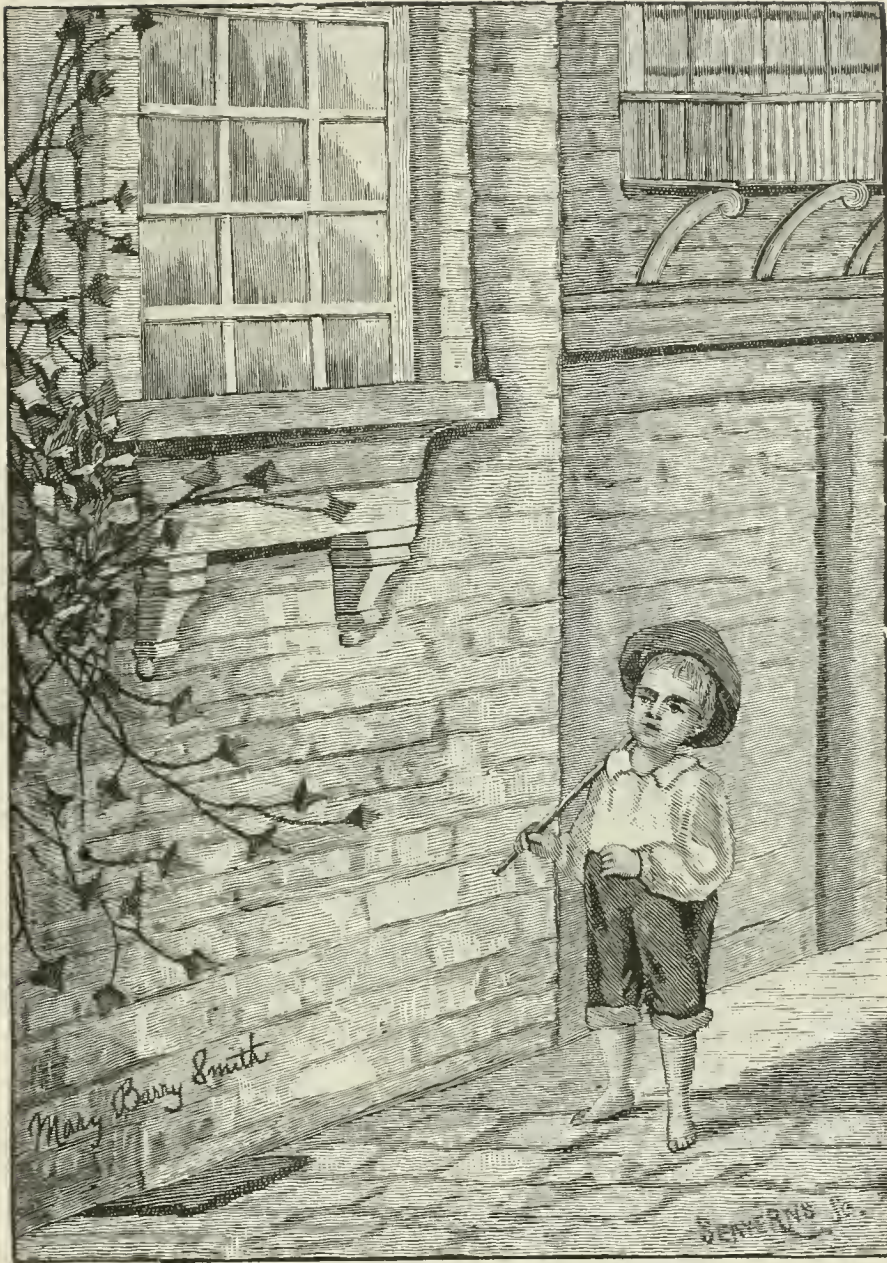
## XLIII.

How do I love thee? Let me count  
 the ways.  
 I love thee to the depth and breadth  
 and height  
 My soul can reach, when feeling out  
 of sight  
 For the ends of being and ideal grace.  
 I love thee to the level of every day's  
 Most quiet need, by sun and candle-  
 light.  
 I love thee freely, as men strive for  
 right.  
 I love thee purely, as they turn from  
 praise.

I love thee with the passion put to  
 use  
 In my old griefs, and with my child-  
 hood's faith.  
 I love thee with a love I seemed to  
 lose  
 With my lost saints. I love thee with  
 the breath,  
 Smiles, tears, of all my life; and, if  
 God choose,  
 I shall but love thee better after  
 death.

## XLIV.

BELOVED, thou hast brought me many  
 flowers  
 Plucked in the garden all the sum-  
 mer through  
 And winter; and it seemed as if they  
 grew  
 In this close room, nor missed the sun  
 and showers.  
 So, in the like name of that love of  
 ours,  
 Take back these thoughts which here  
 unfolded too,  
 And which on warm and cold days I  
 withdrew  
 From my heart's ground. Indeed,  
 those beds and bowers  
 Be overgrown with bitter weeds and  
 rue,  
 And wait thy weeding; yet here's  
 eglantine,  
 Here's ivy! Take them, as I used to  
 do  
 Thy flowers, and keep them where  
 they shall not pine.  
 Instruct thine eyes to keep their col-  
 ors true,  
 And tell thy soul their roots are left  
 in mine.



"I heard, last night, a little child go singing  
'Neath Casa Guidi windows by the church."— Page 429.

UNIVERSITY  
OF  
CHICAGO



# CASA GUIDI WINDOWS.

A Poem,

IN TWO PARTS.

---

THIS poem contains the impressions of the writer upon events in Tuscany of which she was a witness. "From a window," the critic may demur. She bows to the objection in the very title of her work. No continuous narrative nor exposition of political philosophy is attempted by her. It is a simple story of personal impressions, whose only value is in the intensity with which they were received, as proving her warm affection for a beautiful and unfortunate country, and the sincerity with which they are related, as indicating her own good faith, and freedom from partisanship.

Of the two parts of this poem, the first was written nearly three years ago; while the second resumes the actual situation of 1851. The discrepancy between the two parts is a sufficient guaranty to the public of the truthfulness of the writer, who, though she certainly escaped the epidemic "falling sickness" of enthusiasm for Pio Nono, takes shame upon herself that she believed, like a woman, some royal oaths, and lost sight of the probable consequences of some obvious popular defects. If the discrepancy should be painful to the reader, let him understand that to the writer it has been more so. But such discrepancies we are called upon to accept at every hour by the conditions of our nature, implying the interval between aspiration and performance, between faith and disillusion, between hope and fact.

"O trusted broken prophecy,  
O richest fortune sourly crosst,  
Born for the future, to the future lost!"

Nay, not lost to the future in this case. The future of Italy shall not be disinherited.

FLORENCE, 1851.

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## PART I.

I HEARD last night a little child go  
singing  
'Neath Casa Guidi windows, by the  
church,  
"O bella libertà, O bella!" stringing  
The same words still on notes, he  
went in search  
So high for, you concluded the up-  
springing  
Of such a nimble bird to sky from  
perch

Must leave the whole bush in a trem-  
ble green,  
And that the heart of Italy must  
beat,  
While such a voice had leave to rise  
serene  
'Twixt church and palace of a Flor-  
ence street:  
A little child, too, who not long had  
been  
By mother's finger steadied on his  
feet,  
And still "O bella libertà" he sang.

Then I thought, musing, of the innumerable  
 Sweet songs which still for Italy outrang  
 From older singers' lips, who sang not thus  
 Exultingly and purely, yet, with pang  
 Fast sheathed in music, touched the heart of us  
 So finely, that the pity scarcely pained.  
 I thought how Filicaja led on others,  
 Bewailers for their Italy enchained.  
 And how they call her childless among mothers,  
 Widow of empires, ay, and scarce refrained  
 Cursing her beauty to her face, as brothers  
 Might a shamed sister's, — "Had she been less fair,  
 She were less wretched," — how, evoking so  
 From congregated wrong and heaped despair  
 Of men and women writhing under blow,  
 Harrowed and hideous in a filthy lair,  
 Some personating image wherein woe  
 Was wrapt in beauty from offending much,  
 They called it Cybele, or Niobe,  
 Or laid it corpse-like on a bier for such,  
 Where all the world might drop for Italy  
 Those cadenced tears which burn not where they touch, —  
 "Juliet of nations, caust thou die as we?  
 And was the violet crown that crowned thy head  
 So over-large, though new buds made it rough,  
 It slipped down, and across thine eyelids dead,  
 O sweet, fair Juliet?" Of such songs enough,  
 Too many of such complaints! Behold, instead,  
 Void at Verona, Juliet's marble trough:<sup>1</sup>  
 As void as that is, are all images  
 Men set between themselves and actual wrong

<sup>1</sup> They show at Verona, as the tomb of Juliet, an empty trough of stone.

To catch the weight of pity, meet the stress  
 Of conscience; since 'tis easier to gaze long  
 On mournful masks and sad effigies  
 Than on real, live, weak creatures crushed by strong.

For me, who stand in Italy to-day  
 Where worthier poets stood and sang before.

I kiss their footsteps, yet their words gainsay.  
 I can but muse in hope upon this shore

Of golden Arno as it shoots away  
 Through Florence' heart beneath her bridges four, —

Bent bridges seeming to strain off like bows,  
 And tremble while the arrow undertile

Shoots on, and cleaves the marble as it goes,  
 And strikes up palace-walls on either side,

And froths the cornice out in glittering rows,  
 With doors and windows quaintly multiplied,

And terrace-sweeps, and gazers upon all,  
 By whom if flower or kerchief were thrown out

From any lattice there, the same would fall

Into the river underneath, no doubt,  
 It runs so close and fast 'twixt wall and wall.

How beautiful! The mountains from without

In silence listen for the word said next.

What word will men say, — here where Giotto planted

His campanile like an unperplexed  
 Fine question heavenward, touching the things granted

A noble people, who, being greatly vexed

In act, in aspiration keep undaunted?  
 What word will God say? Michel's Night and Day

And Dawn and Twilight wait in marble scorn,<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> These famous statues recline in the Sagrestia Nuova, on the tombs of Giuliano de' Medici, third son of Lorenzo the Magnificent, and Lorenzo of Urbino, his grandson.

Like dogs upon a dunghill, conched  
on clay  
From whence the Medicean stamp's  
outworn,  
The final putting-off of all such  
sway  
By all such hands, and freeing of the  
unborn  
In Florence and the great world  
outside Florence.

Three hundred years his patient statues wait  
In that small chapel of the dim St.  
Lawrence:

Day's eyes are breaking bold and passionate

Over his shoulder, and will flash  
abhorrence  
On darkness, and with level looks  
meet fate,

When once loose from that marble  
film of theirs;

The Night has wild dreams in her  
sleep, the Dawn

Is haggard as the sleepless. Twilight wears

A sort of horror; as the veil withdrawn

'Twixt the artist's soul and works  
had left them heirs

Of speechless thoughts which would  
not quail nor fawn,

Of angers and contempts, of hope  
and love:

For not without a meaning did he  
place

The princely Urbino on the seat  
above

With everlasting shadow on his face,  
While the slow dawns and twilights  
disapprove

The ashes of his long-extinguished  
race

Which never more shall clog the  
feet of men.

I do believe, divinest Angelo,  
That winter-hour in Via Larga,  
when

They bade thee build a statue up in  
snow,<sup>1</sup>

And straight that marvel of thine  
art again

Dissolved beneath the sun's Italian  
glow,

Strozzi's epigram on the Night, with Michel Angelo's rejoinder, is well known.

<sup>1</sup> This mocking task was set by Pietro, the unworthy successor of Lorenzo the Magnificent.

Thine eyes, dilated with the plastic  
passion,

Thawing, too, in drops of wounded  
manhood, since,

To mock alike thine art and indignation,

Laughed at the palace-window the  
new prince, —

("Aha! this genius needs for exaltation,

When all's said, and how'er the  
proud may wince,

A little marble from our princely  
mines!")

I do believe that hour thou laughedst  
too

For the whole sad world, and for  
thy Florentines,

After those few tears, which were  
only few!

That as, beneath the sun, the grand  
white lines

Of thy snow-statue trembled and  
withdrew, —

The head, erect as Jove's, being  
palsied first,

The eyelids flattened, the full brow  
turned blank,

The right hand, raised but now as  
if it curst,

Dropt, a mere snowball (till the people sank

Their voices, though a louder laughter burst

From the royal window) — thou  
couldst proudly thank

God and the prince for promise and  
presage,

And laugh the laugh back, I think  
verily,

Thine eyes being purged by tears  
of righteous rage

To read a wrong into a prophecy,  
And measure a true great man's  
heritage

Against a mere great-duke's posterity.  
I think thy soul said then, "I do  
not need

A principedom and its quarries, after  
all;

For if I write, paint, carve a word,  
indeed,

On book, or board, or dust, on floor,  
or wall,

The same is kept of God, who taketh  
heed

That not a letter of the meaning fall  
Or ere it touch and teach his world's  
deep heart,

Outlasting, therefore, all your lordships, sir!

So keep your stone. beseech you, for your part,  
To cover up your grave-place, and refer

The proper titles: *I live by my art.*  
The thought I threw into this snow shall stir

This gazing people when their gaze is done;  
And the tradition of your act and mine,

When all the snow is melted in the sun,

Shall gather up for unborn men a sign  
Of what is the true principedom; ay, and none

Shall laugh that day, except the drunk with wine."

X Amen, great Angelo! the day's at hand.

If many laugh not on it, shall we weep?

Much more we must not, let us understand.

Through rhymers sonnetearing in their sleep,

And archaists mumbling dry bones up the land,

And sketchers landing ruined towns a-heap, —

Through all that drowsy hum of voices smooth,

The hopeful bird mounts carolling from brake,

The hopeful child, with leaps to catch his growth,

Sings open-eyed for liberty's sweet sake;

And I, a singer also from my youth,  
Prefer to sing with these who are awake,

With birds, with babes, with men who will not fear

The baptism of the holy morning dew,  
(And many of such wakers now are here,

Complete in their anointed manhood, who

Will greatly dare, and greatlier persevere,)

Than join those old thin voices with my new,

And sigh for Italy with some safe sigh

Cooped up in music 'twixt an oh and ah:

Nay, hand in hand with that young child will I

Go singing rather, "*Bella libertà,*"

Than, with those poets, croon the dead, or ery

"*Se tu men bella fossi, Italia!*"

"Less wretched if less fair." Perhaps a truth

Is so far plain in this, that Italy,

Long trammelled with the purple of her youth

Against her age's ripe activity,

Sits still upon her tombs, without death's ruth,

But also without life's brave energy.

"Now tell us what is Italy?" men ask;

And others answer, "Virgil, Cicero, Catullus, Cæsar." What beside, to task

The memory closer? — "Why, Boccaccio,

Dante, Petrarca," — and if still the flask

Appears to yield its wine by drops too slow, —

"Angelo, Raffael, Pergolese," — all

Whose strong hearts beat through stone, or charged again

The paints with fire of souls electrical,

Or broke up heaven for music. What more then?

Why, then, no more. The chaplet's last beads fall

In naming the last saintship within ken,

And, after that, none prayeth in the land.

Alas! this Italy has too long swept

Heroic ashes up for hour-glass sand;

Of her own past, impassioned nympholept!

Consenting to be nailed here by the hand

To the very bay-tree under which she slept

A queen of old, and plucked a leafy branch;

And, licensing the world too long indeed

To use her broad phylacteries to stanch

And stop her bloody lips, she takes no heed

How one clear word would draw an avalanche

Of living sons around her to succeed

The vanished generations. Can she count  
 These oil-eaters with large, live, mobile mouths  
 Agape for macaroni, in the amount  
 Of consecrated heroes of her south's  
 Bright rosary? The pitcher at the fount.  
 The gift of gods, being broken, she much loathes  
 To let the ground-leaves of the place confer  
 A natural bowl. So henceforth she would seem  
 No nation, but the poet's pensioner,  
 With alms from every land of song and dream,  
 While aye her pipers sadly pipe of her  
 Until their proper breaths, in that extreme  
 Of sighing, split the reed on which they played;  
 Of which, no more. But never say "No more"  
 To Italy's life! Her memories undismayed  
 Still argue "evermore;" her graves implore  
 Her future to be strong, and not afraid;  
 Her very statues send their looks before.

We do not serve the dead: the past is past.  
 God lives, and lifts his glorious mornings up  
 Before the eyes of men awake at last,  
 Who put away the meats they used to sup,  
 And down upon the dust of earth outeast  
 The dregs remaining of the ancient cup,  
 Then turned to wakeful prayer and worthy act.  
 The dead, upon their awful 'vantage ground,  
 The sun not in their faces, shall abstract  
 No more our strength: we will not be discrowned  
 As guardians of their crowns, nor deign transact  
 A barter of the present, for a sound  
 Of good so counted in the foregone days.

O dead! ye shall no longer cling to us  
 With rigid hands of desiccating praise,  
 And drag us backward by the garment thus,  
 To stand and laud you in long-drawn virelays.  
 We will not henceforth be oblivious  
 Of our own lives, because ye lived before,  
 Nor of our acts, because ye acted well.  
 We thank you that ye first unlatched the door,  
 But will not make it inaccessible  
 By thankings on the threshold any more.

We hurry onward to extinguish hell  
 With our fresh souls, our younger hope, and God's  
 Maturity of purpose. Soon shall we  
 Die also, and, that then our periods  
 Of life may round themselves to memory  
 As smoothly as on our graves the burial-sods,  
 We now must look to it to excel as ye,  
 And bear our age as far, unlimited  
 By the last mind-mark; so, to be invoked  
 By future generations, as their dead.

'Tis true, that, when the dust of death has choked  
 A great man's voice, the common words he said  
 Turn oracles, the common thoughts he yoked  
 Like horses, draw like griffins: this is true  
 And acceptable. I, too, should desire,  
 When men make record with the flowers they strew,  
 "Savonarola's soul went out in fire  
 Upon our Grand-duke's piazza,<sup>1</sup> and burned through  
 A moment first, or ere he did expire,  
 The veil betwixt the right and wrong, and showed

<sup>1</sup> Savonarola was burnt for his testimony against papal corruptions as early as March, 1498: and, as late as our own day, it has been a custom in Florence to strew with violets the pavement where he suffered, in grateful recognition of the anniversary.

How near God sate and judged the  
     judges there,"  
     Upon the self-same pavement over-  
     strewed  
 To cast my violets with as reverent  
     care,  
     And prove that all the winters  
     which have snowed  
 Cannot snow out the scent from  
     stones and air,  
     Of a sincere man's virtues. This  
     was he,  
 Savonarola, who, while Peter sank  
     With his whole boat-load, called  
     courageously,  
 "Wake Christ, wake Christ!" who,  
     having tried the tank  
     Of old church-waters used for bap-  
     tistry  
 Ere Luther came to spill them, swore  
     they stank;  
     Who also by a princely death-bed  
     cried,  
 "Loose Florence, or God will not  
     lose thy soul!"  
     Then fell back the Magnificent, and  
     died  
 Beneath the star-look shooting from  
     the cowl,  
     Which turned to wormwood-bitter-  
     ness the wide  
 Deep sea of his ambitions. It were  
     foul  
     To grudge Savonarola and the rest  
 Their violets: rather pay them quick  
     and fresh.  
     The emphasis of death makes mani-  
     fest  
 The eloquence of action in our flesh;  
     And men who living were but dim-  
     ly guessed,  
 When once free from their life's en-  
     tangled mesh,  
     Show their full length in graves, or  
     oft indeed  
 Exaggerate their stature, in the flat,  
     To noble admirations which ex-  
     ceed  
 Most nobly, yet will calculate in that  
     But accurately. We who are the  
     seed  
 Of buried creatures, if we turned and  
     spat  
     Upon our antecedents, we were  
     vile.  
 Bring violets rather. If these had  
     not walked  
     Their furlong, could we hope to  
     walk our mile?

Therefore bring violets. Yet if we,  
     self-balked,  
     Stand still, a-strewing violets all  
     the while,

These moved in vain, of whom we  
     have vainly talked.

So rise up henceforth with a cheer-  
     ful smile,

And, having strewn the violets, reap  
     the corn,

And, having reaped and garnered,  
     bring the plough

And draw new furrows 'neath the  
     healthy morn,

And plant the great Hereafter in  
     this Now.

Of old 'twas so. How step by step  
     was worn,

As each man gained on each secure-  
     ly! how

Each by his own strength sought his  
     own Ideal,—

The ultimate Perfection leaning  
     bright

From out the sun and stars to bless  
     the leal

And earnest search of all for Fair  
     and Right

Through doubtful forms by earth ac-  
     counted real!

Because old Jubal blew into de-  
     light

The souls of men with clear-piped  
     melodies,

If youthful Asaph were content at  
     most

To draw from Jubal's grave, with lis-  
     tening eyes,

Traditionary music's floating ghost  
 Into the grass-grown silence, were it  
     wise?

And was't not wiser, Jubal's breath  
     being lost,

That Miriam clashed her cymbals to  
     surprise

The sun between her white arms  
     flung apart,

With new glad golden sounds? that  
     David's strings

O'erflowed his hand with music  
     from his heart?

So harmony grows full from many  
     springs,

And happy accident turns holy art.

You enter, in your Florence wander-  
     ings,

The Church of St. Maria Novella.  
 Pass  
 The left stair, where at plague-time  
 Machiavel<sup>1</sup>  
 Saw one with set fair face as in a  
 glass,  
 Dressed out against the fear of death  
 and bell,  
 Rustling her silks in pauses of the  
 mass  
 To keep the thought off how her hus-  
 band fell,  
 When she left home, stark dead  
 across her feet,—  
 The stair leads up to what the Or-  
 gagnas save  
 Of Dante's demons; you in pass-  
 ing it  
 Ascend the right stair from the far-  
 ther nave  
 To muse in a small chapel scarcely  
 lit  
 By Cimabue's Virgin. Bright and  
 brave,  
 That picture was accounted, mark,  
 of old:  
 A king stood bare before its sovran  
 grace,<sup>2</sup>  
 A reverent people shouted to be-  
 hold  
 The picture, not the king; and even  
 the place  
 Containing such a miracle grew  
 bold,  
 Named the Glad Borgo from that  
 beauteous face  
 Which thrilled the artist after work  
 to think  
 His own ideal Mary-smile should  
 stand  
 So very near him,—he, within the  
 brink  
 Of all that glory, let in by his hand  
 With too divine a rashness! Yet  
 none shrink  
 Who come to gaze here now; albeit  
 'twas planned  
 Sublimely in the thought's simpli-  
 city.

<sup>1</sup> See his description of the plague in Florence.

<sup>2</sup> Charles of Anjou, in his passage through Florence, was permitted to see this picture while yet in Cimabue's "bottega." The populace followed the royal visitor, and, from the universal delight and admiration, the quarter of the city in which the artist lived was called "Borgo Allegri." The picture was carried in triumph to the church, and deposited there.

The Lady, throned in empyreal state,  
 Minds only the young Babe upon  
 her knee,  
 While sidelong angels bear the royal  
 weight,  
 Prostrated meekly, smiling ten-  
 derly  
 Oblivion of their wings; the child  
 thereat  
 Stretching its hand like God. If  
 any should,  
 Because of some stiff draperies and  
 loose joints,  
 Gaze scorn down from the heights  
 of Raffaellood  
 On Cimabue's picture, Heaven anoints  
 The head of no such critic, and his  
 blood  
 The poet's curse strikes full on, and  
 appoints  
 To ague and cold spasms forever-  
 more.  
 A noble picture! worthy of the shout  
 Wherewith along the streets the  
 people bore  
 Its cherub-faces which the sun threw  
 out  
 Until they stooped, and entered the  
 church-door.  
 Yet rightly was young Giotto talked  
 about,  
 Whom Cimabue found among the  
 sheep,<sup>1</sup>  
 And knew, as gods know gods, and  
 carried home  
 To paint the things he had painted,  
 with a deep  
 And fuller insight, and so overcome  
 His Chapel-Lady with a heavenlier  
 sweep  
 Of light; for thus we mount into the  
 sun  
 Of great things known or acted.  
 I hold, too,  
 That Cimabue smiled upon the lad  
 At the first stroke which passed  
 what he could do,  
 Or else his Virgin's smile had never  
 had  
 Such sweetness in't. All great men  
 who foreknew  
 Their heirs in art, for art's sake have  
 been glad,

<sup>1</sup> How Cimabue found Giotto, the shepherd-boy, sketching a ram of his flock upon a stone, is prettily told by Vasari, who also relates that the elder artist Margheritone died "infastidito" of the successes of the new school.

And bent their old white heads as  
 if uncrowned,  
 Fanatics of their pure ideals still  
 Far more than of their triumphs,  
 which were found  
 With some less vehement struggle of  
 the will.  
 If old Margheritone trembled,  
 swooned,  
 And died despairing at the open  
 sill  
 Of other men's achievements (who  
 achieved  
 By loving art beyond the master) he  
 Was old Margheritone, and con-  
 ceived  
 Never, at first youth and most eesta-  
 sy,  
 A Virgin like that dream of one,  
 which heaved  
 The death-sigh from his heart. If  
 wistfully  
 Margheritone sickened at the smell  
 Of Cimabue's laurel, let him go!  
 For Cimabue stood up very well  
 In spite of Giotto's, and Angelico  
 The artist-saint kept smiling in his  
 cell  
 The smile with which he welcomed  
 the sweet slow  
 Inbreak of angels (whitening  
 through the dim  
 That he might paint them) while the  
 sudden sense  
 Of Raffael's future was revealed to  
 him  
 By force of his own fair works' com-  
 petence.  
 The same blue waters where the  
 dolphins swim  
 Suggest the tritons. Through the  
 blue immense  
 Strike out, all swimmers! cling not  
 in the way  
 Of one another, so to sink, but learn  
 The strong man's impulse, catch  
 the freshening spray  
 He throws up in his motions, and dis-  
 cern  
 By his clear westering eye, the  
 time of day.  
 Thou, God, hast set us worthy gifts  
 to earn  
 Besides thy heaven and thee! and  
 when I say  
 There's room here for the weakest  
 man alive  
 To live and die, there's room, too,  
 I repeat,

For all the strongest to live well, and  
 strive  
 Their own way by their individual  
 heat,  
 Like some new bee-swarm leaving  
 the old hive,  
 Despite the wax which tempts so  
 violet-sweet.  
 Then let the living live, the dead re-  
 tain  
 Their grave-cold flowers! though  
 honor's best supplied  
 By bringing actions to prove theirs  
 not vain.  
 Cold graves, we say? it shall be  
 testified  
 That living men who burn in heart  
 and brain,  
 Without the dead were colder. If  
 we tried  
 To sink the past beneath our feet, be  
 sure  
 The future would not stand. Pre-  
 cipitate  
 This old roof from the shrine, and, in-  
 secure,  
 The nesting swallows fly off, mate  
 from mate.  
 How scant the gardens, if the graves  
 were fewer!  
 The tall green poplars grew no  
 longer straight  
 Whose tops not looked to Troy.  
 Would any fight  
 For Athens, and not swear by Mara-  
 thon?  
 Who dared build temples, without  
 tombs in sight?  
 Or live, without some dead man's  
 benison?  
 Or seek truth, hope for good, and  
 strive for right,  
 If, looking up, he saw not in the  
 sun  
 Some angel of the martyrs all day  
 long  
 Standing and waiting? Your last  
 rhythm will need  
 Your earliest keynote. Could I sing  
 this song,  
 If my dead masters had not taken  
 heed  
 To help the heavens and earth to  
 make me strong,  
 As the wind ever will find out some  
 reed,  
 And touch it to such issues as be-  
 long



To such a frail thing? None may  
grudge the dead  
Libations from full cups. Unless we  
choose  
To look back to the hills behind us  
spread,  
The plains before us sadden and con-  
fuse:  
If orphaned, we are disinherited.

I would but turn these lachrymals to  
use,  
And pour fresh oil in from the olive-  
grove,  
To furnish them as new lamps. Shall  
I say  
What made my heart beat with ex-  
ulting love  
A few days back?—  
The day was such a day  
As Florence owes the sun. The  
sky above,  
Its weight upon the mountains seemed  
to lay,  
And palpitate in glory, like a dove  
Who has flown too fast, full-hearted—  
take away  
The image! for the heart of man  
beat higher  
That day in Florence, flooding all her  
streets  
And piazzas with a tumult and de-  
sire.  
The people, with accumulated heats,  
And faces turned one way, as if one  
fire  
Both drew and flushed them, left  
their ancient beats,  
And went up toward the palace-  
Pitti wall  
To thank their Grand-duke, who, not  
quite of course,  
Had graciously permitted, at their  
call,  
The citizens to use their civic force  
To guard their civic homes. So,  
one and all,  
The Tuscan cities streamed up to the  
source  
Of this new good at Florence, tak-  
ing it  
As good so far, presageful of more  
good,—  
The first torch of Italian freedom,  
lit  
To toss in the next tiger's face who  
should  
Approach too near them in a greedy  
fit,—

The first pulse of an even flow of  
blood  
To prove the level of Italian veins  
Towards rights perceived and grant-  
ed. How we gazed  
From Casa Guidi windows, while,  
in trains  
Of orderly procession—banners  
raised,  
And intermittent bursts of martial  
strains  
Which died upon the shout, as if  
amazed  
By gladness beyond music—they  
passed on!  
The Magistracy, with insignia, passed,  
And all the people shouted in the  
sun,  
And all the thousand windows which  
had east  
A ripple of silks in blue and scarlet  
down,  
(As if the houses overflowed at last.)  
Seemed growing larger with fair  
heads and eyes.  
The Lawyers passed, and still arose  
the shout,  
And hands broke from the windows  
to surprise  
Those grave, calm brows with bay-  
tree leaves thrown out.  
The Priesthood passed, the friars  
with worldly-wise  
Keen, sidelong glances from their  
beards about  
The street to see who shouted; many  
a monk  
Who takes a long rope in the waist  
was there:  
Whereat the popular exultation  
drunk  
With indrawn "vivas" the whole  
sunny air,  
While through the murmuring win-  
dows rose and sunk  
A cloud of kerchiefed hands,— "The  
Church makes fair  
Her welcome in the new Pope's  
name." Ensued  
The black sign of the "Martyrs"—  
(name no name,  
But count the graves in silence.)  
Next were viewed  
The Artists; next the Trades; and  
after came  
The People,—flag and sign, and  
rights as good,—  
And very loud the shout was for that  
same

Motto, "Il popolo." IL POPOLO, —  
 The word means dukedom, empire,  
 majesty,  
 And kings in such an hour might  
 read it so.  
 And next, with banners, each in his  
 degree,  
 Deputed representatives a-row  
 Of every separate state of Tuscauy:  
 Siena's she-wolf, 'bristling on the  
 fold  
 Of the first flag, preceded Pisa's hare;  
 And Massa's lion floated calm in  
 gold,  
 Pienza's following with his silver  
 stare;  
 Arezzo's steed pranced clear from  
 bridle-hold, —  
 And well might shout our Florence,  
 greeting there  
 These, and more brethren. Last,  
 the world had sent  
 The various children of her teeming  
 flanks —  
 Greeks, English, French — as if to  
 a parliament  
 Of lovers of her Italy in ranks,  
 Each bearing its land's symbol rever-  
 erent;  
 At which the stones seemed breaking  
 into thanks,  
 And rattling up the sky, such  
 sounds in proof  
 Arose, the very house-walls seemed to  
 bend;  
 The very windows, up from door to  
 roof,  
 Flashed out a rapture of bright heads,  
 to mend  
 With passionate looks the gesture's  
 whirling off  
 A hurricane of leaves. Three hours  
 did end  
 While all these passed; and ever, in  
 the crowd,  
 Rude men, unconscious of the tears  
 that kept  
 Their beards moist, shouted; some  
 few laughed aloud,  
 And none asked any why they  
 laughed and wept:  
 Friends kissed each other's cheeks,  
 and foes long vowed  
 More warmly did it; two-months  
 babies leapt  
 Right upward in their mother's  
 arms, whose black,  
 Wide, glittering eyes looked else-  
 where; lovers pressed

Each before either, neither glancing  
 back;  
 And peasant maidens smoothly 'tired  
 and tressed  
 Forgot to finger on their throats  
 the slack  
 Great pearl-strings; while old blind  
 men would not rest,  
 But pattered with their staves, and  
 slid their shoes  
 Along the stones, and smiled as if  
 they saw.  
 O Heaven, I think that day had no-  
 ble use  
 Among God's days! So near stood  
 Right and Law,  
 Both mutually forborne! Law  
 would not bruise,  
 Nor Right deny; and each in reverent  
 awe  
 Honored the other. And if, ne'er-  
 theless,  
 That good day's sun delivered to the  
 vines  
 No charta, and the liberal Duke's  
 excess  
 Did scarce exceed a Guelf's or Ghibel-  
 line's  
 In any special actual righteous-  
 ness  
 Of what that day he granted, still the  
 signs  
 Are good and full of promise, we  
 must say,  
 When multitudes approach their kings  
 with prayers,  
 And kings concede their people's  
 right to pray,  
 Both in one sunshine. Grievs are not  
 despairs,  
 So uttered; nor can royal claims dis-  
 may  
 When men from humble homes and  
 ducal chairs,  
 Hate wrong together. It was well  
 to view  
 Those banners ruffled in a ruler's face  
 Inscribed, "Live, freedom, union,  
 and all true  
 Brave patriots who are aided by God's  
 grace!"  
 Nor was it ill when Leopoldo drew  
 His little children to the window-  
 place  
 He stood in at the Pitti, to suggest  
 They, too, should govern as the people  
 willed.  
 What a cry rose then! Some, who  
 saw the best,

Declared his eyes filled up and over-  
filled

With good, warm human tears,  
which unrepresed

Ran down. I like his face: the fore-  
head's build

Has no capacious genius, yet per-  
haps

Sufficient comprehension; mild and  
sad,

And careful nobly, not with care  
that wraps

Self-loving hearts, to stifle and make  
mad,

But careful with the care that shuns  
a lapse

Of faith and duty: studious not to  
add

A burden in the gathering of a  
gain.

And so, God save the Duke, I say  
with those

Who that day shouted it; and, while  
dukes reign,

May all wear in the visible overflows  
Of spirit such a look of careful

pain!

For God must love it better than re-  
pose.

And all the people who went up to  
let

Their hearts out to that Duke, as  
has been told—

Where guess ye that the living people  
met,

Kept tryst, formed ranks, chose  
leaders, first unrolled

Their banners?

In the Loggia? where is set  
Cellini's godlike Perseus, bronze or

gold,  
(How name the metal, when the  
statue flings

Its soul so in your eyes?) with brow  
and sword

Superbly calm, as all opposing things,  
Slain with the Gorgon, were no

more abhorred

Since ended?

No, the people sought no wings  
From Perseus in the Loggia, nor  
implored

An inspiration in the place beside  
From that dim bust of Brutus,  
jagged and grand,

Where Buonarroti passionately tried  
From out the close-clenched marble  
to demand

The head of Rome's sublimest homi-  
cide,

Then dropt the quivering mallet  
from his hand,

Despairing he could find no model-  
stuff

Of Brutus in all Florence where he  
found

The gods and gladiators thick enough.  
Nor there! the people chose still

holier ground:

The people, who are simple, blind,  
and rough.

Know their own angels, after look-  
ing round.

Whom chose they then? where met  
they?

On the stone

Called Dante's,—a plain flat stone  
scarce discerned

From others in the pavement,—  
whereupon

He used to bring his quiet chair out,  
turned

To Brunelleschi's church, and pour  
alone

The lava of his spirit when it  
burned:

It is not cold to-day. O passion-  
ate

Poor Dante, who, a banished Floren-  
tine,

Didst sit austere at banquets of the  
great,

And muse upon this far-off stone of  
thine,

And think how oft some passer used  
to wait

A moment, in the golden day's de-  
cline,

With "Good-night, dearest Dante!"  
—well, good-night!

I muse now, Dante, and think veri-  
ly,

Though chapelled in the by-way, out  
of sight,

Ravenna's bones would thrill with  
ecstasy,

Couldst know thy favorite stone's  
elected right

As tryst-place for thy Tuscans to  
foresee

Their earliest chartas from. Good-  
night, good-morn,

Henceforward, Dante! now my soul  
is sure

That thine is better comforted of  
scorn.

And looks down earthward in complete cure  
 Than when, in Santa Croce Church forlorn  
 Of any corpse, the architect and hewer  
 Did pile the empty marbles as thy tomb.<sup>1</sup>  
 For now thou art no longer exiled, now  
 Best honored: we salute thee who art come  
 Back to the old stone with a softer brow  
 Than Giotto drew upon the wall, for some  
 Good lovers of our age to track and plough<sup>2</sup>  
 Their way to, through time's ordures stratified,  
 And startle broad awake into the dull  
 Bargello chamber: now thou'rt milder-eyed, —  
 Now Beatrix may leap up glad to cull  
 Thy first smile, even in heaven and at her side,  
 Like that which, nine years old, looked beautiful  
 At May-game. What do I say? I only meant  
 That tender Dante loved his Florence well,  
 While Florence, now, to love him is content;  
 And mark ye, that the piercingest sweet smell  
 Of love's dear incense by the living sent  
 To find the dead is not accessible  
 To lazy livers, no narcotic, not  
 Swung in a censer to a sleepy tune,  
 But trod out in the morning air by hot,  
 Quick spirits who tread firm to ends foreshown,  
 And use the name of greatness un-forgot,  
 To meditate what greatness may be done.

<sup>1</sup> The Florentines, to whom the Ravenese refused the body of Dante (demanded of them "in a late remorse of love"), have given a cenotaph in this church to their divine poet. Something less than a grave!

<sup>2</sup> In allusion to Mr. Kirkup's discovery of Giotto's fresco portrait of Dante.

For Dante sits in heaven, and ye stand here,  
 And more remains for doing, all must feel,  
 Than trysting on his stone from year to year  
 To shift processions, civic toe to heel,  
 The town's thanks to the Pitti. Are ye freer  
 For what was felt that day? A chariot-wheel  
 May spin fast, yet the chariot never roll;  
 But if that day suggested something good,  
 And bettered, with one purpose, soul by soul —  
 Better means freer. A land's brotherhood  
 Is most puissant: men, upon the whole,  
 Are what they can be; nations, what they would.  
 Will, therefore, to be strong, thou Italy!  
 Will to be noble! Austrian Metternich  
 Can fix no yoke, unless the neck agree;  
 And thine is like the lion's when the thick  
 Dews shudder from it, and no man would be  
 The stroker of his mane, much less would prick  
 His nostril with a reed. When nations roar  
 Like lions, who shall tame them, and defraud  
 Of the due pasture by the river-shore?  
 Roar, therefore! shake your dew-laps dry abroad:  
 The amphitheatre with open door  
 Leads back upon the benches who applaud  
 The last spear-thruster.

Yet the heavens forbid  
 That we should call on passion to confront  
 The brutal with the brutal, and, amid  
 This ripening world, suggest a lion-hunt  
 And lion's vengeance for the wrongs men did  
 And do now, though the spears are getting blunt.

We only call, because the sight and  
 proof  
 Of lion-strength hurts nothing; and  
 to show  
 A lion-heart, and measure paw with  
 hoof,  
 Helps something, even, and will in-  
 struct a foe,  
 As well as the onslaught, how to  
 stand aloof:  
 Or else the world gets past the mere  
 brute blow,  
 Or given or taken. Children use the  
 fist  
 Until they are of age to use the  
 brain;  
 And so we needed Cæsars to assist  
 Man's justice, and Napoleons to  
 explain  
 God's counsel, when a point was  
 nearly missed,  
 Until our generations should at-  
 tain  
 Christ's stature nearer. Not that we,  
 alas!  
 Attain already; but a single inch  
 Will raise to look down on the sword-  
 man's pass,  
 As knightly Roland on the coward's  
 finch:  
 And, after chloroform and ether-  
 gas,  
 We find out slowly what the bee  
 and finch  
 Have ready found, through Nature's  
 lamp in each, —  
 How to our races we may justify  
 Our individual claims, and, as we  
 reach  
 Our own grapes, bend the top vines  
 to supply  
 The children's uses, — how to fill a  
 breach  
 With olive-branches, — how to  
 quench a lie  
 With truth, and smite a foe upon the  
 cheek  
 With Christ's most conquering kiss.  
 Why, these are things  
 Worth a great nation's finding, to  
 prove weak  
 The "glorious arms" of military  
 kings.  
 And so, with wide embrace, my Eng-  
 land, seek  
 To stifle the bad heat and flicker-  
 ings  
 Of this world's false and nearly ex-  
 pended fire.

Draw palpitating arrows to the  
 wood,  
 And twang abroad thy high hopes  
 and thy higher  
 Resolves from that most virtuous  
 altitude,  
 Till nations shall unconsciously as-  
 pire  
 By looking up to thee, and learn  
 that good  
 And glory are not different. An-  
 nounce law  
 By freedom; exalt chivalry by  
 peace;  
 Instruct how clear, calm eyes can  
 overawe,  
 And how pure hauds, stretched  
 simply to release  
 A bond-slave, will not need a sword  
 to draw  
 To be held dreadful. O my Eng-  
 land, cease  
 Thy purple with no alien agonies,  
 No struggles toward encroachment,  
 no vile war!  
 Disband thy captains, change thy  
 victories;  
 Be henceforth prosperous, as the  
 angels are,  
 Helping, not humbling.

Drums and battle-cries  
 Go out in music of the morning-star;  
 And soon we shall have thinkers in  
 the place  
 Of fighters, each found able as a  
 man  
 To strike electric influence through a  
 race,  
 Unstayed by city-wall and barbi-  
 can.  
 The poet shall look grander in the  
 face  
 Than even of old (when he of  
 Greece began  
 To sing "that Achillean wrath which  
 slew  
 So many heroes"), seeing he shall  
 treat  
 The deeds of souls heroic toward the  
 true,  
 The oracles of life, previsions sweet  
 And awful, like divine swans gliding  
 through  
 White arms of Ledas, which will  
 leave the heat  
 Of their escaping godship to endue  
 The human medium with a hea-  
 venly flush.

Meanwhile, in this same Italy we want  
 Not popular passion, to arise and  
 crush,  
 But popular conscience, which may  
 covenant  
 For what it knows. Concede with-  
 out a blush,  
 To grant the "civic guard" is not to  
 grant  
 The civic spirit, living and awake:  
 Those lappets on your shoulders, citi-  
 zens,  
 Your eyes strain after sideways till  
 they ache,  
 (While still, in admirations and  
 amens,  
 The crowd comes up on festa-days  
 to take  
 The great sight in), are not intelli-  
 gence,  
 Not courage even: alas! if not the  
 sign  
 Of something very noble, they are  
 nought;  
 For every day ye dress your fallow  
 kine  
 With fringes down their cheeks,  
 though unbesought  
 They loll their heavy heads, and  
 drag the wine,  
 And bear the wooden yoke as they  
 were taught  
 The first day. What ye want is  
 light; indeed  
 Not sunlight (ye may well look up  
 surprised  
 To those unfathomable heavens  
 that feed  
 Your purple hills), but God's light  
 organized  
 In some high soul crowned capable  
 to lead  
 The conscious people, conscious and  
 advised;  
 For, if we lift a people like mere  
 clay,  
 It falls the same. We want thee, O  
 unfound  
 And sovran teacher! if thy beard  
 be gray  
 Or black, we bid thee rise up from  
 the ground,  
 And speak the word God giveth  
 thee to say,  
 Inspiring into all this people round,  
 Instead of passion, thought, which  
 pioneers  
 All generous passion, purifies from  
 sin,

And strikes the hour for. Rise up,  
 teacher! here's  
 A crowd to make a nation! best be-  
 gin  
 By making each a man, till all be  
 peers  
 Of earth's true patriots and pure  
 martyrs in  
 Knowing and daring. Best unbar  
 the doors  
 Which Peter's heirs kept locked so  
 overclose  
 They only let the mice across the  
 floors,  
 While every churchman dangles, as  
 he goes,  
 The great key at his girdle, and ab-  
 hors  
 In Christ's name meekly. Open wide  
 the house,  
 Concede the entrance with Christ's  
 liberal mind,  
 And set the tables with his wine and  
 bread.  
 What! "Commune in both kinds?"  
 In every kind —  
 Wine, wafer, love, hope, truth, un-  
 limited,  
 Nothing kept back. For, when a  
 man is blind  
 To starlight, will he see the rose is  
 red?  
 A bondsman shivering at a Jesuit's  
 foot —  
 "Væ! meâ culpâ!" — is not like to  
 stand  
 A freedman at a despot's, and dis-  
 pute  
 His titles by the balance in his  
 hand,  
 Weighing them "suo jure." Tend  
 the root,  
 If careful of the branches, and ex-  
 pand  
 The inner souls of men before you  
 strive  
 For civic heroes.

But the teacher, where?  
 From all these crowded faces, all  
 alive,  
 Eyes, of their own lids flashing them-  
 selves bare,  
 And brows that with a mobile life  
 contrive  
 A deeper shadow, — may we in no  
 wise dare  
 To put a finger out, and touch a  
 man,

<p>And cry, "This is the leader"?          What, all these!          Broad heads, black eyes, yet not a          soul that ran          From God down with a message? all,          to please          The donna waving measures with          her fan,          And not the judgment-angel on his          knees,          (The trumpet just an inch off from          his lips.)          Who, when he breathes next, will put          out the sun?</p> <p>Yet mankind's self were foundered          in eclipse,          If lacking doers, with great works to          be done;          And lo, the startled earth already          dips          Back into light; a better day's begun;          And soon this leader, teacher, will          stand plain,          And build the golden pipes and syn-          thesize          This people-organ for a holy strain.          We hold this hope, and still in all          these eyes          Go sounding for the deep look which          shall drain          Suffused thought into channelled en-          terprise.          Where is the teacher? What now          may he do          Who shall do greatly? Doth he gird          his waist          With a monk's rope, like Luther?          or pursue          The goat, like Tell? or dry his nets          in haste,          Like Masaniello when the sky was          blue?          Keep house, like other peasants, with          inlaced          Bare brawny arms about a favorite          child,          And meditative looks beyond the          door,          (But not to mark the kidling's teeth          have filed          The green shoots of his vine which          last year bore          Full twenty bunches), or on triple-          piled          Throne-velvets sit at ease to bless the          poor,          Like other pontiffs, in the Poorest's          name?</p>	<p>The old tiara keeps itself aslope          Upon his steady brows, which, all          the same,          Bend mildly to permit the people's          hope?</p> <p>Whatever hand shall grasp this ori-          flamme          Whatever man (last peasant or first          pope          Seeking to free his country) shall          appear,          Teach, lead, strike fire into the          masses, fill          These empty bladders with fine air,          insphere          These wills into a unity of will,          And make of Italy a nation — dear          And blessed be that man! the heav-          ens shall kill          No leaf the earth lets grow for him,          and Death          Shall cast him back upon the lap of          Life          To live more surely in a clarion-          breath          Of hero-music. Brutus with the          knife,          Rienzi with the fasces, throb be-          neath          Rome's stones, — and more who threw          away joy's fife          Like Pallas, that the beauty of          their souls          Might ever shine untroubled and en-          tire:          But if it can be true that he who          rolls          The Church's thunders will reserve          her fire          For only light, from eucharistic          bowls          Will pour new life for nations that          expire,          And rend the scarlet of his papal          vest          To gird the weak loins of his coun-          trymen, —          I hold that he surpasses all the rest          Of Romans, heroes, patriots; and          that when          He sat down on the throne, he dis-          possess          The first graves of some glory. See          again,          This country-saving is a glorious          thing!          And if a common man achieved it?          Well.</p>
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Say, a rich man did? Excellent. A king?  
 That grows sublime? A priest? Improbable.  
 A pope? Ah, there we stop, and cannot bring  
 Our faith up to the leap, with history's bell  
 So heavy round the neck of it, albeit  
 We fain would grant the possibility  
 For *thy* sake, Pio Nono!

Stretch thy feet  
 In that case: I will kiss them reverently  
 As any pilgrim to the papal seat:  
 And, such proved possible, thy throne to me  
 Shall seem as holy a place as Pellico's  
 Venetian dungeon, or as Spielberg's grate,  
 At which the Lombard woman hung the rose,  
 Of her sweet soul by its own dewy weight,  
 To feel the dungeon round her sunshine close,  
 And, pining so, died early, yet too late  
 For what she suffered. Yea, I will not choose  
 Betwixt thy throne, Pope Pius, and the spot  
 Marked red forever, spite of rains and dews,  
 Where two fell riddled by the Austrian's shot, —  
 The brothers Bandiera, who accuse,  
 With one same mother-voice and face (that what  
 They speak may be invincible) the sins  
 Of earth's tormentors before God the just,  
 Until the unconscious thunder-bolt begins  
 To loosen in his grasp.

And yet we must  
 Beware, and mark the natural kiths and kins,  
 Of circumstance and office, and distrust  
 The rich man reasoning in a poor man's hut,  
 The poet who neglects pure truth to prove

Statistic fact, the child who leaves a rut  
 For a smoother road, the priest who vows his glove  
 Exhales no grace, the prince who walks afoot,  
 The woman who has sworn she will not love,  
 And this Ninth Pius in Seventh Gregory's chair,  
 With Andrea Doria's forehead.

Count what goes  
 To making up a pope, before he wear  
 That triple crown. We pass the world-wide throes  
 Which went to make the popedom, — the despair  
 Of free men, good men, wise men; the dread shows  
 Of women's faces, by the fagot's flash  
 Tossed out, to the minutest stir and throb  
 O' the white lips; the least tremble of a lash,  
 To glut the red stare of a licensed mob;  
 The short mad cries down oubliettes, and plash  
 So horribly far off; priests trained to rob,  
 And kings, that, like encouraged nightmares, sate  
 On nations' hearts most heavily distressed  
 With monstrous sights and apothegms of fate —  
 We pass these things, because "the times" are prest  
 With necessary charges of the weight  
 Of all this sin, and "Calvin, for the rest,  
 Made bold to burn Servetus. Ah, men err!" —  
 And so do *churches!* which is all we mean  
 To bring to proof in any register  
 Of theological fat kine and lean:  
 So drive them back into the pens! refer  
 Old sins (with pourpoint, "quotha" and "I ween")  
 Entirely to the old times, the old times;  
 Nor ever ask why this preponderant



Infallible pure Church could set her  
chimes  
Most loudly then, just then, — most  
jubilant,  
Precisely then, when mankind stood  
in crimes  
Full heart-deep, and Heaven's judg-  
ments were not scant.  
Inquire still less what signifies a  
church  
Of perfect inspiration and pure laws  
Who burns the first man with a  
brimstone-torch,  
And grinds the second, bone by bone,  
because  
The times, forsooth, are used to  
rack and scorch!  
What is a holy Church unless she  
awes  
The times down from their sins?  
Did Christ select  
Such amiable times to come and  
teach  
Love to, and mercy? The whole  
world were wrecked  
If every mere great man, who lives to  
reach  
A little leaf of popular respect,  
Attained not simply by some special  
breach  
In the age's customs, by some pre-  
cedence  
In thought and act, which, having  
proved him higher  
Than those he lived with, proved  
his competence  
In helping them to wonder and as-  
pire.

My words are guiltless of the bigot's  
sense.  
My soul has fire to mingle with the  
fire  
Of all these souls, within or out of  
doors  
Of Rome's church or another. I be-  
lieve  
In one Priest, and one temple, with  
its floors  
Of shining jasper gloomed at morn  
and eve  
By countless knees of earnest au-  
ditors,  
And crystal walls too lucid to per-  
ceive,  
That none may take the measure of  
the place  
And say, "So far the porphyry, then  
the flint;

To this mark mercy goes, and there  
ends grace,"  
Though still the permeable crystals  
hint  
At some white starry distance,  
bathed in space.  
I feel how Nature's ice-crusts keep  
the dint  
Of undersprings of silent Deity.  
I hold the articulated gospels which  
Show Christ among us crucified on  
tree.  
I love all who love truth, if poor or  
rich  
In what they have won of truth pos-  
sessively.  
No altars, and no hands defiled with  
pitch,  
Shall scare me off; but I will pray  
and eat  
With all these, taking leave to choose  
my ewers,  
And say at last, "Your visible  
churches cheat  
Their inward types; and, if a church  
assures  
Of standing without failure and de-  
feat,  
The same both fails and lies."

To leave which lures  
Of wider subject through past years,  
— behold,  
We come back from the popedom to  
the pope,  
To ponder what he *must* be, ere we  
are bold  
For what he *may* be, with our heavy  
hope  
To trust upon his soul. So, fold by  
fold,  
Explore this mummy in the priestly  
cope,  
Transmitted through the darks of  
time, to catch  
The man within the wrappage, and  
discern  
How he, an honest man, upon the  
watch  
Full fifty years for what a man may  
learn,  
Contrived to get just there; with  
what a snatch  
Of old-world oboli he had to earn  
The passage through; with what a  
drowsy sop,  
To drench the busy barkings of his  
brain;



What ghosts of pale tradition,  
 wreathed with hop  
 'Gainst wakeful thought, he had to  
 entertain  
 For heavenly visions; and consent  
 to stop  
 The clock at noon, and let the hour  
 remain  
 (Without vain windings-up) invio-  
 late  
 Against all chimings from the belfry.  
 Lo,  
 From every given pope you must  
 abate,  
 Albeit you love him, some things —  
 good, you know —  
 Which every given heretic you  
 hate,  
 Assumes for his, as being plainly so.  
 A pope must hold by popes a little,  
 — yes,  
 By councils, from Nicæa up to  
 Trent, —  
 By hierocratic empire, more or less  
 Irresponsible to men, — he must re-  
 sent  
 Each man's particular conscience,  
 and repress  
 Inquiry, meditation, argument,  
 As tyrants faction. Also, he must  
 not  
 Love truth too dangerously, but pre-  
 fer  
 "The interests of the Church" (be-  
 cause a blot  
 Is better than a rent, in miniver;)

Submit to see the people swallow  
 hot  
 Husk-porridge, which his chartered  
 churchmen stir  
 Quoting the only true God's epi-  
 graph,  
 "Feed my lambs, Peter!" must  
 consent to sit  
 Attesting with his pastoral ring and  
 staff  
 To such a picture of our Lady, hit  
 Off well by artist-angels (though  
 not half  
 As fair as Giotto would have painted  
 it;)

To such a vial, where a dead man's  
 blood  
 Runs yearly warm beneath a church-  
 man's finger;  
 To such a holy house of stone and  
 wood,  
 Whereof a cloud of angels was the  
 bringer

From Bethlehem to Loreto. Were  
 it good  
 For any pope on earth to be a flinger  
 Of stones against these high-niched  
 counterfeits?  
 Apostates only are iconoclasts.  
 He dares not say, while this false  
 thing abets  
 That true thing, "This is false." He  
 keeps his fasts  
 And prayers, as prayer and fast  
 were silver frets  
 To change a note upon a string that  
 lasts,  
 And make a lie a virtue. Now, if  
 he  
 Did more than this, higher hoped, and  
 braver dared,  
 I think he were a pope in jeopardy,  
 Or no pope rather, for his truth had  
 barred  
 The vaulting of his life; and cer-  
 tainly,  
 If he do only this, mankind's regard  
 Moves on from him at once to seek  
 some new  
 Teacher and leader. He is good and  
 great  
 According to the deeds a pope can  
 do;  
 Most liberal, save those bonds; affec-  
 tionate,  
 As princes may be, and, as priests  
 are, true,  
 But only the ninth Pius after eight,  
 When all's praised most. At best  
 and hopefullest,  
 He's pope: we want a man! His  
 heart beats warm;  
 But, like the prince enchanted to  
 the waist,  
 He sits in stone, and hardens by a  
 charm  
 Into the marble of his throne high-  
 placed.  
 Mild benediction waves his saintly  
 arm —  
 So, good! But what we want's a  
 perfect man,  
 Complete and all alive: half traver-  
 tine  
 Half suits our need, and ill sub-  
 serves our plan.  
 Feet, knees, nerves, sinews, energies  
 divine,  
 Were never yet too much for men  
 who ran  
 In such hard ways as must be this of  
 thine,

Deliverer whom we seek, who'er  
 thou art,  
 Pope, prince, or peasant! If, indeed,  
 the first,  
 The noblest, therefore! since the  
 heroic heart  
 Within thee must be great enough to  
 burst  
 Those trammels buckling to the  
 baser part  
 Thy saintly peers in Rome, who  
 crossed and curst  
 With the same finger.

                  Come, appear, be found,  
 If pope or peasant, come! we hear the  
 cock,

    The courtier of the mountains when  
 first crowned  
 With golden dawn; and orient glories  
 flock

    To meet the sun upon the highest  
 ground.

Take voice, and work! we wait to  
 hear thee knock

    At some one of our Florentine nine  
 gates,  
 On each of which was imaged a sub-  
 lime

    Face of a Tuscan genius, which, for  
 hate's  
 And love's sake both, our Florence  
 in her prime

    Turned boldly on all comers to her  
 states,  
 As heroes turned their shields in an-  
 tique time

    Emblazoned with honorable acts.  
 And though  
 The gates are blank now of such  
 images,

    And Petrarch looks no more from  
 Nicolo

Toward dear Arczzo, 'twixt the aca-  
 cia-trees,

    Nor Dante, from gate Gallo — still  
 we know,

Despite the razing of the blazonries,  
 Remains the consecration of the  
 shield:

The dead heroic faces will start out  
 On all these gates, if foes should  
 take the field,

And blend sublimely, at the earliest  
 shout,

    With living heroes who will scorn  
 to yield

A hair's-breadth even, when, gazing  
 round about,

They find in what a glorious com-  
 pany  
 They fight the foes of Florence. Who  
 will grudge

    His one poor life, when that great  
 man we see

Has given five hundred years, the  
 world being judge

    To help the glory of his Italy?  
 Who, born the fair side of the Alps,  
 will budge,

    When Dante stays, when Ariosto  
 stays,

When Petrarch stays forever? Ye  
 bring swords,

    My Tuscans? Ay, if wanted in  
 this haze,

Bring swords, but first bring souls, —  
 bring thoughts and words,

    Unrusted by a tear of yesterday's,  
 Yet awful by its wrong, — and cut  
 these cords,

    And now this green, lush falseness  
 to the roots,

And shut the mouth of hell below  
 the swathe!

    And, if ye can bring songs too, let  
 the lute's

Recoverable music softly bathe  
 Some poet's hand, that, through all  
 bursts and bruits

Of popular passion, all unripe and  
 rathe

    Convictions of the popular intellect,  
 Ye may not lack a finger up the air,

    Annunciative, reproving, pure,  
 erect,

To show which way your first ideal  
 bare

    The whiteness of its wings when  
 (sorely pecked

By falcons on your wrists) it unaware  
 Arose up overhead and out of sight.

Meanwhile, let all the far ends of the  
 world

    Breathe back the deep breath of  
 their old delight,

To swell the Italian banner just un-  
 furled.

    Help, lands of Europe! for, if Aus-  
 tria fight,

The drums will bar your slumber.  
 Had ye curled

    The laurel for your thousand artists'  
 brows,

If these Italian hands had planted  
 none?

    Can any sit down idle in the house,

Nor hear appeals from Buonarroti's  
stone  
And Raffael's canvas, rousing and  
to rouse?  
Where's Poussin's master? Gallie  
Avignon  
Bred Laura, and Vaucluse's fount  
has stirred  
The heart of France too strongly, as  
it lets  
Its little stream out (like a wiz-  
ard's bird  
Which bounds upon its emerald wing,  
and wets  
The rocks on each side), that she  
should not gird  
Her loins with Charlemagne's sword  
when foes beset  
The country of her Petrarch. Spain  
may well  
Be minded how from Italy she  
caught,  
To mingle with her tinkling Moor-  
ish bell,  
A fuller cadence and a subtler  
thought.  
And even the New World, the re-  
ceptacle  
Of freemen, may send glad men, as it  
ought,  
To greet Vespucci Amerigo's door.  
While England claims, by trump of  
poetry,  
Verona, Venice, the Ravenna-shore,  
And dearer holds John Milton's  
Ficsole  
Than Langlande's Malvern with the  
stars in flower.

And Vallombrosa, we two went to  
see  
Last June, beloved companion,  
where sublime  
The mountains live in holy fami-  
lies,  
And the slow pine-woods ever climb  
and climb  
Half up their breasts, just stagger as  
they seize  
Some gray crag, drop back with it  
many a time,  
And straggle blindly down the preci-  
pice.  
The Vallombrosan brooks were  
strewn as thick  
That June day, knee-deep with dead  
beechen leaves,  
As Milton saw them ere his heart  
grew sick,

And his eyes blind. I think the  
monks and beeves  
Are all the same too: scarce have  
they changed the wick  
On good St. Gualbert's altar which  
receives  
The convent's pilgrims; and the  
pool in front  
(Wherein the hill-stream trout are  
cast, to wait  
The beatific vision and the grunt  
Used at refectory) keeps its weedy  
state,  
To baffle saintly abbots who would  
count  
The fish across their breviary, nor  
'bate  
The measure of their steps. O wa-  
terfalls  
And forests! sound and silence!  
mountains bare,  
That leap up peak by peak, and  
catch the palls  
Of purple and silver mist to rend and  
share  
With one another, at electric calls  
Of life in the sunbeams, — till we can-  
not dare  
Fix your shapes, count your num-  
ber! we must think  
Your beauty and your glory helped  
to fill  
The cup of Milton's soul so to the  
brink,  
He nevermore was thirsty when God's  
will  
Had shattered to his sense the last  
chain-link  
By which he had drawn from Na-  
ture's visible  
The fresh well-water. Satisfied by  
this,  
He sang of Adam's paradise, and  
smiled,  
Remembering Vallombrosa. There-  
fore is  
The place divine to English man and  
child,  
And pilgrims leave their souls here  
in a kiss.

For Italy's the whole earth's treas-  
ury, piled  
With reveries of gentle ladies,  
flung  
Aside, like ravelled silk, from life's  
worn stuff;  
With coins of scholars' fancy,  
which, being rung

On workday counter, still sound silver-proof:

In short, with all the dreams of dreamers young,  
Before their heads have time for slipping off

Hope's pillow to the ground. How oft, indeed,  
We've sent our souls out from the rigid north,

On bare white feet which would not print nor bleed,  
To climb the Alpine passes, and look forth,

Where booming low the Lombard rivers lead  
To gardens, vineyards, all a dream is worth, —

Sights thou and I, love, have seen afterward  
From Tuscan Bellosguardo, wide awake,<sup>1</sup>

When, standing on the actual blessed sward  
Where Galileo stood at nights to take

The vision of the stars, we have found it hard,  
Gazing upon the earth and heaven, to make

A choice of beauty.

Therefore let us all  
Refreshed in England or in other land,

By visions, with their fountain rise and fall,  
Of this earth's darling, — we, who understand

A little how the Tuscan musical Vowels do round themselves as if they planned

Eternities of separate sweetness, — we,  
Who loved Sorrento vines in picture-book,

Or ere in winecup we pledged faith or glee, —  
Who loved Rome's wolf with demi-gods at suck,

Or ere we loved truth's own divinity, —

Who loved, in brief, the classic hill and brook,  
And Ovid's dreaming tales and Petrarch's song,

<sup>1</sup> Galileo's villa, close to Florence, is built on an eminence called Bellosguardo.

Or e'er we loved Love's self even, — let us give

The blessing of our souls (and wish them strong  
To bear it to the height where prayers arrive,

When faithful spirits pray against a wrong.)  
To this great cause of southern men who strive

In God's name for man's rights, and shall not fail!

Behold they shall not fail. The shouts ascend  
Above the shrieks, in Naples, and prevail.

Rows of shot corpses, waiting for the end  
Of burial, seem to smile up straight and pale

Into the azure air, and apprehend  
That final gun-flash from Palermo's coast

Which lightens their apocalypse of death.

So let them die! The world shows nothing lost;

Therefore not blood. Above or underneath,

What matter, brothers, if ye keep your post

On duty's side? As sword returns to sheath,

So dust to grave; but souls find place in heaven.

Heroic daring is the true success,  
The eucharistic bread requires no leaven;

And, though your ends were hopeless, we should bless

Your cause as holy. Strive — and, having striven,

Take for God's recompense that righteousness!

## PART II.

I WROTE a meditation and a dream,  
Hearing a little child sing in the street:

I leant upon his music as a theme,  
Till it gave way beneath my heart's full beat

Which tried at an exultant prophecy,

But dropped before the measure  
 was complete —  
 Alas for songs and hearts! O Tus-  
 cany,  
 O Dante's Florence, is the type too  
 plain?  
 Didst thou, too, only sing of liberty,  
 As little children take up a high  
 strain  
 With unintentioned voices, and break  
 off  
 To sleep upon their mothers' knees  
 again?  
 Couldst thou not watch one hour?  
 then sleep enough,  
 That sleep may hasten manhood,  
 and sustain  
 The faint, pale spirit with some mus-  
 cular stuff.

But we who cannot slumber as thou  
 dost;  
 We thinkers, who have thought for  
 thee, and failed;  
 We hoppers, who have hoped for  
 thee, and lost;  
 We poets, wandered round by  
 dreams,<sup>1</sup> who hailed  
 From this Atrides' roof (with lintel-  
 post  
 Which still drips blood, — the worse  
 part hath prevailed)  
 The fire-voice of the beacons to de-  
 clare  
 Troy taken, sorrow ended, — cozened  
 through  
 A crimson sunset in a misty air,  
 What now remains for such as we to  
 do?  
 God's judgments, peradventure,  
 will be bare  
 To the roots of thunder, if we kneel  
 and sue?

From Casa Guidi windows I looked  
 forth,  
 And saw ten thousand eyes of Flor-  
 entines  
 Flash back the triumph of the Lom-  
 bard north, —  
 Saw fifty banners, freighted with the  
 signs  
 And exultations of the awakened  
 earth,  
 Float on above the multitude in lines,

<sup>1</sup> See the opening passage of the Agamem-  
 non of Æschylus.

Straight to the Pitti. So, the vision  
 went.  
 And so, between those populous rough  
 hands  
 Raised in the sun, Duke Leopold  
 outleant,  
 And took the patriot's oath which  
 henceforth stands  
 Among the oaths of perjurers, emi-  
 nent  
 To catch the lightnings ripened for  
 these lands.

Why swear at all, thou false Duke  
 Leopold?  
 What need to swear? What need to  
 boast thy blood  
 Unspoilt of Austria, and thy heart  
 unsold  
 Away from Florence? It was under-  
 stood  
 God made thee not too vigorous or  
 too bold;  
 And men had patience with thy quiet  
 mood,  
 And women pity, as they saw thee  
 pace  
 Their festive streets with premature  
 gray hairs.  
 We turned the mild dejection of thy  
 face  
 To princely meanings, took thy wrin-  
 kling cares  
 For ruffling hopes, and called thee  
 weak, not base.  
 Nay, better light the torches for more  
 prayers,  
 And smoke the pale Madonnas at  
 the shrine, —  
 Being still "our poor Grand-duke,  
 our good Grand-duke,  
 Who cannot help the Austrian in  
 his line," —  
 Than write an oath upon a nation's  
 book  
 For men to spit at with scorn's  
 blurring brine!  
 Who dares forgive what none can  
 overlook?

For me, I do repent me in this  
 dust  
 Of towns and temples which makes  
 Italy;  
 I sigh amid the sighs which breathe  
 a gust  
 Of dying century to century  
 Around us on the uneven crater-  
 crust

Of these old worlds; I bow my soul  
and knee.

Absolve me, patriots, of my wo-  
man's fault  
That ever I believed the man was  
true!

These sceptred strangers shun the  
common salt,  
And therefore, when the general  
board's in view,

And they stand up to carve for  
blind and halt,  
The wise suspect the viands which  
ensue.

I much repent, that in this time  
and place,  
Where many corpse-lights of experi-  
ence burn

From Cæsar's and Lorenzo's fester-  
ing race,  
To enlighten groping reasoners, I  
could learn

No better counsel for a simple case  
Than to put faith in princes, in my  
turn.

Had all the death-piles of the an-  
cient years  
Flared up in vain before me? knew  
I not

What stench arises from some pur-  
ple gears?  
And how the sceptres witness whence  
they got

Their brier-wood, crackling through  
the atmosphere's  
Foul smoke, by princely perjuries  
kept hot?

Forgive me, ghosts of patriots,—  
Brutus, thou  
Who trailest down hill into life again  
Thy blood-weighted cloak, to indict  
me with thy slow,

Reproachful eyes!—for being taught  
in vain,

That, while the illegitimate Cæsars  
show  
Of meaner stature than the first full  
strain

(Confessed incompetent to conquer  
Gaul.)  
They swoon as feebly, and cross Ru-  
bicons

As rashly, as any Julius of them  
all!  
Forgive, that I forgot the mind which  
runs

Through absolute races, too unseep-  
tical!  
I saw the man among his little sons,

His lips were warm with kisses  
while he swore;

And I, because I am a woman, I,  
Who felt my own child's coming  
life before

The prescience of my soul, and held  
faith high,—

I could not bear to think, whoever  
bore,

That lips so warmed could shape so  
cold a lie.

From Casa Guidi windows I looked  
out,  
Again looked, and beheld a different  
sight.

The Duke had fled before the peo-  
ple's shout

“Long live the Duke!” A people, to  
speak right,

Must speak as soft as courtiers, lest  
a doubt

Should curdle brows of gracious sov-  
ereigns white.

Moreover, that same dangerous  
shouting meant

Some gratitude for future favors  
which

Were only promised, the Constitu-  
ent

Implied; the whole being subject to  
the hitch

In “*motn proprios*,” very inci-  
dent

To all these Czars, from Paul to Paulo-  
vitch.

Whereat the people rose up in the  
dust

Of the ruler's flying feet, and shouted  
still

And loudly; only, this time, as was  
just,

Not “Live the Duke!” who had fled  
for good or ill,

But “Live the People!” who re-  
mained and must,

The unrenounced and unrenouncea-  
ble.

Long live the people! How they  
lived! and boiled

And bubbled in the caldron of the  
street!

How the young blustered, nor the  
old recoiled!

And what a thunderous stir of tongues  
and feet

Trod flat the palpitating bells, and  
foiled

<p>The joy-guns of their echo, shattering it! How down they pulled the Duke's arms everywhere! How up they set new café-signs, to show Where patriots might sip ices in pure air! (The fresh paint smelling somewhat.) To and fro How marched the civic guard, and stopped to stare When boys broke windows in a civic glow! How rebel songs were sung to loyal tunes, And bishops cursed in ecclesiastic metres! How all the Circoli grew large as moons, And all the speakers, moonstruck, — thankful greeters Of prospects which struck poor the ducal boons, A mere free Press and Chambers! frank repeaters Of great Gnerazzi's praises — "There's a man, The father of the land, who, truly great, Takes off that national disgrace and ban, The farthing-tax upon our Florence- gate, And saves Italia as he only can!" How all the nobles fled, and would not wait, Because they were most noble! which being so, How liberals vowed to burn their palaces, Because free Tuscans were not free to go! How grown men raged at Austria's wickedness, And smoked, while fifty striplings in a row Marched straight to Piedmont for the wrong's redress! You say we failed in duty, — we who wore Black velvet like Italian democrats, Who slashed our sleeves like patri- ots, nor forswore The true republic in the form of hats? We chased the archbishop from the Duomo-door, We chalked the walls with bloody caveats</p>	<p>Against all tyrants. If we did not fight Exactly, we fired muskets up the air To show that victory was ours of right. We met, had free discussion every- where (Except, perhaps, i' the Chambers) day and night. We proved the poor should be em- ployed . . . that's fair, — And yet the rich not worked for anywise, — Pay certified, yet payers abrogated, Full work secured, yet liabili- ties To overwork excluded, — not one bated Of all our holidays, that still, at twice Or thrice a week, are moderately rated. We proved that Austria was dis- lodged, or would Or should be, and that Tuscany in arms Should, would, dislodge her, ending the old feud; And yet to leave our piazzas, shops, and farms, For the simple sake of fighting, was not good — We proved that also. "Did we carry charms Against being killed ourselves, that we should rush On killing others? what, desert here- with Our wives and mothers? — was that duty? Tush!" At which we shook the sword within the sheath Like heroes, only louder; and the flush Ran up the cheek to meet the future wreath. Nay, what we proved, we shouted — how we shouted! (Especially the boys did), boldly planting That tree of liberty, whose fruit is doubted, Because the roots are not of Nature's granting. A tree of good and evil: none, with- out it, Grow gods; alas! and, with it, men are wanting.</p>
--	---



O holy knowledge, holy liberty!  
 O holy rights of nations! If I  
 speak  
 These bitter things against the jugglery  
 Of days that in your names proved  
 blind and weak,  
 It is that tears are bitter. When  
 we see  
 The brown skulls grin at death in  
 churchyards bleak,  
 We do not cry, "This Yorick is too  
 light,"  
 For death grows deathlier with that  
 mouth he makes.  
 So with my mocking. Bitter things  
 I write  
 Because my soul is bitter for your  
 sakes,  
 O freedom! O my Florence!

Men who might  
 Do greatly in a universe that breaks  
 And burns, must ever *know* before  
 they do.  
 Courage and patience are but sacrifice;  
 And sacrifice is offered for and to  
 Something conceived of. Each man  
 pays a price  
 For what himself counts precious,  
 whether true  
 Or false the appreciation it implies.  
 But here, — no knowledge, no conception,  
 nought!  
 Desire was absent, that provides  
 great deeds  
 From out the greatness of prevent-  
 ent thought;  
 And action, action, like a flame that  
 needs  
 A steady breath and fuel, being  
 caught  
 Up, like a burning reed from other  
 reeds,  
 Flashed in the empty and uncertain  
 air,  
 Then wavered, then went out. Be-  
 hold, who blames  
 A crooked course, when not a goal  
 is there  
 To round the fervid striving of the  
 games?  
 An ignorance of means may minister  
 To greatness; but an ignorance of  
 aims  
 Makes it impossible to be great at  
 all.

So with our Tuscans. Let none dare  
 to say,  
 "Here virtue never can be nation-  
 al;  
 Here fortitude can never cut a way  
 Between the Austrian muskets, out  
 of thrall:  
 I tell you rather, that whoever may  
 Discern true ends here shall grow  
 pure enough  
 To love them, brave enough to strive  
 for them,  
 And strong to reach them, though  
 the roads be rough;  
 That, having learnt — by no mere  
 apothegm —  
 Not just the draping of a graceful  
 stuff  
 About a statue, broidered at the  
 hem, —  
 Not just the trilling on an opera-  
 stage,  
 Of "libertà" to bravos — (a fair word,  
 Yet too allied to inarticulate rage  
 And breathless sobs, for singing,  
 though the chord  
 Were deeper than they struck it!)  
 but the gauge  
 Of civil wants sustained, and wrongs  
 abhorred,  
 The serious, sacred meaning and  
 full use  
 Of freedom for a nation, — then, in-  
 deed,  
 Our Tuscans, underneath the bloody  
 dews  
 Of some new morning, rising up  
 agreed  
 And bold, will want no Saxon souls  
 or thews  
 To sweep their piazzas clear of Aus-  
 tria's breed.

Alas, alas! it ~~was~~ not so this  
 time.  
 Conviction was not, courage failed,  
 and truth  
 Was something to be doubted of.  
 The mime  
 Changed masks, because a mime.  
 The tide as smooth  
 In running in as out, no sense of  
 crime  
 Because no sense of virtue. Sudden  
 ruth  
 Seized on the people: they would  
 have again  
 Their good Grand-duke, and leave  
 Guerazzi, though

He took that tax from Florence.  
 "Much in vain  
 He takes it from the market-carts, we  
 throw,  
 While urgent that no market-men  
 remain,  
 But all march off, and leave the spade  
 and plough  
 To die among the Lombards. Was  
 it thus  
 The dear paternal Duke did? Live  
 the Duke!"  
 At which the joy-bells multitudi-  
 nous,  
 Swept by an opposite wind, as loudly  
 shook.  
 Call back the mild archbishop to  
 his house,  
 To bless the people with his fright-  
 ened look,—  
 He shall not yet be hanged, you  
 comprehend!  
 Seize on Guerazzi; guard him in full  
 view,  
 Or else we stab him in the back to  
 end!  
 Rub out those chalked devices, set up  
 new  
 The Duke's arms, doff your Phry-  
 gian caps, and mend  
 The pavement of the piazzas broke into  
 By barren poles of freedom: smooth  
 the way  
 For the ducal carriage, lest his High-  
 ness sigh,  
 "Here trees of liberty grew yester-  
 day!"  
 "Long live the Duke!" How roared  
 the cannonry!  
 How rocked the bell-towers! and  
 through thickening spray  
 Of nosegays, wreaths, and kerchiefs  
 tossed on high,  
 How marched the civic guard, the  
 people still  
 Being good at shouts, especially the  
 boys!  
 Alas, poor people, of an unfledged  
 will  
 Most fitly expressed by such a callow  
 voice!  
 Alas, still poorer Duke, incapable  
 Of being worthy even of so much  
 noise!  
 You think he came back instantly,  
 with thanks,  
 And tears in his faint eyes, and hands  
 extended

To stretch the franchise through  
 their utmost ranks?  
 That having, like a father appreh-  
 ended,  
 He came to pardon fatherly those  
 pranks  
 Played out, and now in filial service  
 ended?  
 That some love-token, like a prince,  
 he threw  
 To meet the people's love-call in re-  
 turn?  
 Well, how he came I will relate to  
 you;  
 And if your hearts should burn—  
 why, hearts *must* burn,  
 To make the ashes which things  
 old and new  
 Shall be washed clean in—as this  
 Duke will learn.  
 From Casa Guidi windows gazing,  
 then,  
 I saw and witness how the Duke  
 came back.  
 The regular tramp of horse, and  
 tread of men,  
 Did smite the silence like an anvil  
 black  
 And sparkless. With her wide  
 eyes at full strain,  
 Our Tuscan nurse exclaimed, "Alack,  
 alack,  
 Signora! these shall be the Austri-  
 ans."—"Nay,  
 Be still," I answered; "do not wake  
 the child!"  
 —For so, my two-months' baby  
 sleeping lay  
 In milky dreams upon the bed, and  
 smiled,  
 And I thought, "He shall sleep on,  
 while he may,  
 Through the world's baseness: not  
 being yet defiled,  
 Why should he be disturbed by  
 what is done?"  
 Then, gazing, I beheld the long-drawn  
 street  
 Live out, from end to end, full in  
 the sun,  
 With Austria's thousand; sword and  
 bayonet,  
 Horse, foot, artillery, cannons roll-  
 ing on  
 Like blind, slow storm-clouds gestant  
 with the heat  
 Of undeveloped lightnings, each  
 bestrode

By a single man, dust-white from  
head to heel,  
Indifferent as the dreadful thing he  
rode,  
Like a sculptured Fate serene and  
terrible.  
As some smooth river which has  
overflowed,  
Will slow and silent down its current  
wheel  
A loosened forest, all the pines  
erect,  
So swept, in mute significance of  
storm,  
The marshalled thousands; not an  
eye deflect  
To left or right, to catch a novel form  
Of Florence city adorned by archi-  
tect  
And carver, or of beauties live and  
warm  
Scared at the casements, — all,  
straightforward eyes  
And faces, held as steadfast as their  
swords,  
And cognizant of acts, not image-  
ries.  
The key, O Tuscans, too well fits the  
wards!  
Ye asked for mimes, — these bring  
you tragedies;  
For purple, — these shall wear it as  
your lords.  
Ye played like children, — die like  
innocents.  
Ye mimicked lightnings with a torch,  
— the crack  
Of the actual bolt, your pastime cir-  
cumvents.  
Ye called up ghosts, believing they  
were slack  
To follow any voice from Gilboa's  
tents . . .  
Here's Samuel! — and so, Grand-  
dukes come back!

And yet they are no prophets,  
though they come:  
That awful mantle they are drawing  
close  
Shall be searched one day by the  
shafts of doom  
Through double folds now hoodwink-  
ing the brows.  
Resuscitated monarchs disentomb  
Grave-reptiles with them in their  
new life-throes.  
Let such beware. Behold, the peo-  
ple waits,

Like God: as he, in his serene of  
might,  
So they, in their endurance of long  
straits.  
Ye stamp no nation out, though day  
and night  
Ye tread them with that absolute  
heel which grates  
And grinds them flat from all at-  
tempted height.  
You kill worms sooner with a gar-  
den spade  
Than you kill peoples: peoples will  
not die;  
The tail curls stronger when you  
lop the head:  
They writhe at every wound, and  
multiply  
And shudder into a heap of life  
that's made  
Thus vital from God's own vitality.  
'Tis hard to shrivel back a day of  
God's  
Once fixed for judgment; 'tis as hard  
to change  
The peoples when they rise be-  
neath their loads,  
And heave them from their backs  
with violent wrench  
To crush the oppressor: for that  
judgment-rod's  
The measure of this popular revenge.

Meanwhile, from Casa Guidi win-  
dows, we  
Beheld the armament of Austria  
flow  
Into the drowning heart of Tus-  
cany;  
And yet none wept, none cursed, or,  
if 'twas so,  
They wept and cursed in silence.  
Silently  
Our noisy Tuscans watched the in-  
vading foe;  
They had learnt silence. Pressed  
against the wall,  
And grouped upon the church-steps  
opposite,  
A few pale men and women stared  
at all.  
God knows what they were feeling,  
with their white  
Constrained faces, — they, so prodi-  
gal  
Of cry and gesture when the world  
goes right,  
Or wrong indeed. But here was  
depth of wrong,

And here, still water: they were silent here;

And through that sentient silence struck along

That measured tramp from which it stood out clear,

Distinct the sound and silence, like a gong

At midnight, each by the other awful-er, —

While every soldier in his cap displayed

A leaf of olive. Dusty, bitter thing! Was such plucked at Novara, is it said?

A cry is up in England, which doth ring

The hollow world through, that for ends of trade

And virtue, and God's better worshiping,

We henceforth should exalt the name of Peace,

And leave those rusty wars that eat the soul, —

Besides their clippings at our golden fleece.

I, too, have loved peace, and from bole to bole

Of immemorial undeciduous trees

Would write, as lovers use upon a scroll,

The holy name of Peace, and set it high

Where none could pluck it down. On trees, I say,

Not upon gibbets! — With the greenery

Of dewy branches and the flowery May,

Sweet mediation betwixt earth and sky

Providing, for the shepherd's holiday.

Not upon gibbets! though the vulture leaves

The bones to quiet, which he first picked bare.

Not upon dungeons! though the wretch who grieves

And groans within, less stirs the outer air

Than any little field-mouse stirs the sheaves.

Not upon chain-bolts! though the slave's despair

Has dulled his helpless miserable brain,

And left him blank beneath the free-man's whip

To sing and laugh out idiocies of pain.

Nor yet on starving homes! where many a lip

Has sobbed itself asleep through curses vain.

I love no peace which is not fellowship,

And which includes not mercy. I would have

Rather the raking of the guns across

The world, and shrieks against heaven's architrave;

Rather the struggle in the slippery fosse

Of dying men and horses, and the wave

Blood-bubbling. . . . Enough said!

— by Christ's own cross,

And by this faint heart of my womanhood,

Such things are better than a Peace that sits

Beside a hearth in self-commended mood,

And takes no thought how wind and rain by fits

Are howling out of doors against the good

Of the poor wanderer. What! your peace admits

Of outside anguish while it keeps at home?

I loathe to take its name upon my tongue.

'Tis nowise peace: 'tis treason, stiff with doom;

'Tis gagged despair, and inarticulate wrong,

Annihilated Poland, stifled Rome,

Dazed Naples, Hungary fainting 'neath the thong,

And Austria wearing a smooth olive-leaf

On her brute forehead, while her hoofs outpress

The life from these Italian souls in brief.

O Lord of peace, who art Lord of righteousness,

Constrain the anguished worlds from sin and grief,

Pierce them with conscience, purge them with redress,

And give us peace which is no counterfeit!

But wherefore should we look out  
any more

From Casa Guidi windows? Shut  
them straight,  
And let us sit down by the folded door,  
And veil our saddened faces, and so  
wait

What next the judgment-heavens  
make ready for.

I have grown too weary of these  
windows. Sights  
Come thick enough and clear enough  
in thought,

Without the sunshine: souls have  
inner lights.  
And since the Grand-duke has come  
back, and brought

This army of the North which thus  
requires  
His filial South, we leave him to be  
taught.

His South, too, has learnt something  
certainly,  
Whereof the practice will bring profit  
soon;

And peradventure other eyes may  
see,  
From Casa Guidi windows, what is  
done

Or undone. Whatsoever deeds they  
be,  
Pope Pius will be glorified in none.

Record that gain, Mazzini! It shall  
top  
Some heights of sorrow. Peter's rock,  
so named,

Shall lure no vessel any more to  
drop  
Among the breakers. Peter's chair is  
shamed,

Like any vulgar throne the nations  
lop  
To pieces for their firewood unre-  
claimed;

And when it burns, too, we shall  
see as well  
In Italy as elsewhere. Let it burn.

The cross accounted still adorable  
Is Christ's cross only! If the thief's  
would earn

Some stealthy genuflexions, we re-  
bel;  
And here the impenitent thief's has  
had its turn,

As God knows; and the people on  
their knees  
Scoff, and toss back the crosiers  
stretched like yokes

To press their heads down lower by  
degrees.

So Italy, by means of these last  
strokes,  
Escapes the danger which preceded  
these,

Of leaving captured hands in cloven  
oaks,—  
Of leaving very souls within the  
buckle

Whence bodies struggled outward,—  
of supposing  
That freemen may like bondsmen  
kneel and truckle,

And then stand up as usual, without  
losing  
An inch of stature.

Those whom she-wolves suckle  
Will bite as wolves do in the grapple-  
closing  
Of adverse interests. This at last is  
known,

(Thank Pius for the lesson) that albeit  
Among the Popedom's hundred  
heads of stone

Which blink down on you from the  
roof's retreat  
In Siena's tiger-striped cathedral,  
Joan

And Borgia 'mid their fellows you may  
greet,

A harlot and a devil,— you will see  
Not a man, still less angel, grandly  
set

With open soul to render man more  
free.  
The fishers are still thinking of the  
net,

And, if not thinking of the hook  
too, we  
Are counted somewhat deeply in their  
debt;

But that's a rare case— so, by hook  
and crook,  
They take the advantage, agonizing  
Christ

By rustier nails than those of Ce-  
dron's brook,  
I' the people's body very cheaply  
priced,—

And quote high priesthood out of  
Holy book,  
While buying death-fields with the  
sacrificed.

Priests, priests,— there's no such  
name!— God's own, except  
Ye take most vainly. Through hea-  
ven's lifted gate

The priestly ephod in sole glory  
 swept  
 When Christ ascended, entered in,  
 and sate  
 (With victor face sublimely over-  
 wept)  
 At Deity's right hand to mediate,  
 He alone, he forever. On his breast  
 The Urim and the Thummim, fed with  
 fire  
 From the full Godhead, flicker with  
 the unrest  
 Of human pitiful heart beats. Come  
 up higher,  
 All Christians. Levi's tribe is dis-  
 possess.  
 That solitary alb ye shall admire,  
 But not cast lots for. The last  
 chrism, poured right,  
 Was on that Head, and poured for  
 burial,  
 And not for domination in men's  
 sight.  
 What *are* these churches? The old  
 temple wall  
 Doth overlook them juggling with  
 the sleight  
 Of surplice, candlestick, and altar-  
 pall;  
 East church and west church, ay,  
 north church and south,  
 Rome's church and England's — let  
 them all repent,  
 And make concordats 'twixt their  
 soul and mouth,  
 Succeed St. Paul by working at the  
 tent,  
 Become infallible guides by speak-  
 ing truth,  
 And excommunicate their pride that  
 bent  
 And cramped the souls of men.  
 Why, even here,  
 Priestcraft burns out, the twined  
 linen blazes;  
 Not, like asbestos, to grow white  
 and clear,  
 But all to perish! while the fire-  
 smell raises  
 To life some swooning spirits, who  
 last year  
 Lost breath and heart in these church-  
 stified places.  
 Why, almost through this Pius, we  
 believed  
 The priesthood could be an honest  
 thing, he smiled  
 So saintly while our corn was being  
 sheaved

For his own granaries! Showing  
 now defiled  
 His hireling hands, a better help's  
 achieved  
 Than if they blessed us shepherd-like  
 and mild.  
 False doctrine, strangled by its own  
 amen,  
 Dies in the throat of all this nation.  
 Who  
 Will speak a pope's name as they  
 rise again?  
 What woman or what child will count  
 him true?  
 What dreamer praise him with the  
 voice or pen?  
 What man fight for him? — Pius takes  
 his due.  
 Record that gain, Mazzini! — Yes,  
 but first  
 Set down thy people's faults; set down  
 the want  
 Of soul-conviction; set down aims  
 dispersed,  
 And incoherent means, and valor  
 scant  
 Because of scanty faith, and schisms  
 accursed  
 That wrench these brother-hearts  
 from covenant  
 With freedom and each other. Set  
 down this,  
 And this, and see to overcome it  
 when  
 The seasons bring the fruits thou  
 wilt not miss  
 If wary. Let no cry of patriot  
 men  
 Distract thee from the stern analy-  
 sis  
 Of masses who cry only! keep thy  
 ken  
 Clear as thy soul is virtuous. He-  
 roes' blood  
 Splashed up against thy noble brow  
 in Rome;  
 Let such not blind thee to an inter-  
 lude  
 Which was not also holy, yet did  
 come  
 'Twixt sacramental actions, — broth-  
 erhood  
 Despised even there, and something  
 of the doom  
 Of Remus in the trenches. Listen  
 now —  
 Rossi died silent near where Cæsar  
 died.

He did not say, "My Brutus, is it thou?"  
 But Italy unquestioned testified,  
 "I killed him! I am Brutus. — I avow."  
 At which the whole world's laugh of scorn replied,  
 "A poor maimed copy of Brutus!"  
 Indeed, to be so unlike! too unskilled  
 At Philippi and the honest battle-pike,  
 To be so skilful where a man is killed  
 Near Pompey's statue, and the daggers strike  
 At unawares i' the throat. Was thus fulfilled  
 An omen once of Michel Angelo? —  
 When Marcus Brutus he conceived complete,  
 And strove to hurl him out by blow on blow  
 Upon the marble, at Art's thunder-heat,  
 Till haply (some pre-shadow rising slow  
 Of what his Italy would fancy meet  
 To be called BRUTUS) straight his plastic hand  
 Fell back before his prophet-soul, and left  
 A fragment, a maimed Brutus, — but more grand  
 Than this, so named at Rome, was!  
 Present one woof and warp, Mazzini! Stand  
 With no man hankering for a dagger's heft,  
 No, not for Italy! — nor stand apart.  
 No, not for the Republic! — from those pure  
 Brave men who hold the level of thy heart  
 In patriot truth, as lover and as doer,  
 Albeit they will not follow where thou art  
 As extreme theorist. Trust and distrust fewer.  
 And so bind strong, and keep unstained the cause  
 Which (God's sign granted) war-trumps newly blown  
 Shall yet announce to the world's applause.

But now, the world is busy: it has grown  
 A Fair-going world. Imperial England draws  
 The flowing ends of the earth from Fez, Canton,  
 Delhi, and Stockholm, Athens and Madrid,  
 The Russias and the vast Americas,  
 As if a queen drew in her robes amid  
 Her golden cincture, — isles, peninsulas,  
 Capes, continents, far inland countries hid  
 By jasper-sands and hills of chryso-pras,  
 All trailing in their splendors through the door  
 Of the gorgeous Crystal Palace. Every nation,  
 To every other nation strange of yore,  
 Gives face to face the civic salutation,  
 And holds up in a proud right hand before  
 That congress the best work which she can fashion  
 By her best means. "These corals, will you please  
 To match against your oaks? They grow as fast  
 Within my wilderness of purple seas." —  
 "This diamond stared upon me as I passed  
 (As a live god's eye from a marble frieze)  
 Along a dark of diamonds. Is it classed?" —  
 "I wove these stuffs so subtly that the gold  
 Swims to the surface of the silk like cream  
 And curdles to fair patterns. Ye behold!" —  
 "These delicatest muslins rather seem  
 Than be, you think? Nay, touch them and be bold.  
 Though such veiled Chakhi's face in Hafiz' dream." —  
 "These carpets — you walk slow on them like kings,  
 Inaudible like spirits, while your foot  
 Dips deep in velvet roses and such things." —

"Even Apollonius might commend  
this flute:<sup>1</sup>

The music, winding through the  
stops, upsprings  
To make the player very rich: compute!"

"Here's goblet-glass, to take in  
with your wine  
The very sun its grapes were ripened  
under:

Drink light and juice together, and  
each fine."—

"This model of a steam-ship moves  
your wonder?

You should behold it crushing down  
the brine  
Like a blind Jove, who feels his way  
with thunder."—

"Here's sculpture! Ah, *we* live  
too! why not throw  
Our life into our marbles? Art has  
place

For other artists after Angelo."—

"I tried to paint out here a natural  
face;

For nature includes Raffael, as we  
know,  
Not Raffael nature. Will it help my  
ease?"—

"Methinks you will not match this  
steel of ours!"—

"Nor you this porcelain! One might  
dream the clay

Retained in it the larvæ of the  
flowers,  
They bud so round the cup, the old  
spring-way."—

"Nor you these carven woods,  
where birds in bowers  
With twisting snakes and climbing  
cupids play."

O Magi of the east and of the west,  
Your incense, gold, and myrrh are  
excellent!—

What gifts for Christ, then, bring  
ye with the rest?  
Your hands have worked well: is  
your courage spent

In handwork only? Have you  
nothing best,  
Which generous souls may perfect  
and present,

<sup>1</sup> Philostratus relates of Apollonius, how he objected to the musical instrument of Linus the Rhodian, that it could not enrich or beautify. The history of music in our day would satisfy the philosopher on one point at least.

And He shall thank the givers for?  
no light

Of teaching, liberal nations, for the  
poor

Who sit in darkness when it is not  
night?

No cure for wicked children? Christ  
— no cure!

No help for women sobbing out of  
sight

Because men made the laws? no  
brothel-lure

Burnt out by popular lightnings?  
Hast thou found

No remedy, my England, for such  
woes?

No outlet, Austria, for the scourged  
and bound,

No entrance for the exiled? no re-  
pose,

Russia, for knouted Poles worked  
underground,

And gentle ladies bleached among  
the snows?

No mercy for the slave, America?

No hope for Rome, free France, chi-  
valrie France?

Alas, great nations have great  
shames, I say.

No pity, O world, no tender utter-  
ance

Of benediction, and prayers  
stretched this way

For poor Italia, baffled by mischance?  
O gracious nations, give some ear  
to me!

You all go to your Fair, and I am one  
Who at the roadside of humanity

Beseech your alms, — God's justice to  
be done.

So, prosper!

In the name of Italy,  
Meantime her patriot dead have ben-  
ison.

They only have done well; and,  
what they did

Being perfect, it shall triumph. Let  
them slumber:

No king of Egypt in a pyramid  
Is safer from oblivion, though he  
number

Full seventy cerements for a cover-  
lid.

These dead be seeds of life, and shall  
encumber

The sad heart of the land until it  
loose

The clammy clods, and let out the  
spring-growth



In beatific green through every  
bruise.

The tyrant should take heed to what  
he doth,

Since every victim-carrion turns to  
use,  
And drives a chariot, like a god made  
wroth.

Against each piled injustice. Ay,  
the least.

Dead for Italia, not in vain has died;  
Though many vainly, ere life's  
struggle ceased,

To mad dissimilar ends have swerved  
aside:

Each grave her nationality has  
pieced

By its own majestic breadth, and for-  
tified,

And pinned it deeper to the soil.  
Forlorn

Of thanks be, therefore, no one of  
these graves!

Not hers, — who, at her husband's  
side, in scorn,

Outfaced the whistling shot and hiss-  
ing waves,

Until she felt her little babe unborn  
Recoil, within her, from the violent  
staves

And bloodhounds of the world: at  
which her life

Dropt inwards from her eyes, and fol-  
lowed it

Beyond the hunters. Garibaldi's  
wife

And child died so. And now the sea-  
weeds fit

Her body, like a proper shroud and  
coif,

And murmuringly the ebbing waters  
grit

The little pebbles while she lies in-  
terred

In the sea-sand. Perhaps, ere dying  
thus,

She looked up in his face (which  
never stirred

From its clinched anguish) as to  
make excuse

For leaving him for his, if so she  
erred.

He well remembers that she could  
not choose.

A memorable grave! Another is  
At Genoa. There a king may fitly  
lie,

Who, bursting that heroic heart of  
his

At lost Novara, that he could not  
die,

(Though thrice into the cannon's  
eyes for this

He plunged his shuddering steed, and  
felt the sky

Reel back between the fire-shocks)  
stripped away

The ancestral ermine ere the smoke  
had cleared,

And, naked to the soul, that none  
might say

His kingship covered what was base  
and bleared

With treason, went out straight an  
exile, yea,

An exiled patriot. Let him be re-  
vered.

Yea, verily, Charles Albert has died  
well;

And if he lived not all so, as one  
spoke,

The sin pass softly with the pass-  
ing-bell:

For he was shriven, I think, in can-  
non-smoke,

And, taking off his crown, made  
visible

A hero's forehead. Shaking Austria's  
yoke,

He shattered his own hand and  
heart. "So best,"

His last words were upon his lonely  
bed,

I do not end like popes and dukes  
at least —

"Thank God for it." And now that  
he is dead,

Admitting it is proved and mani-  
fest

That he was worthy, with a dis-  
crowned head,

To measure heights with patriots,  
let them stand

Beside the man in his Oporto shroud,  
And each vouchsafe to take him by

the hand,

And kiss him on the cheek, and say  
aloud,

"Thou, too, hast suffered for our  
native land!

My brother, thou art one of us! be  
proud."

Still, graves, when Italy is talked  
upon.

Still, still, the patriot's tomb, the  
stranger's hate.

Still Niobe ! still fainting in the sun,  
By whose most dazzling arrows vio-  
late

Her beauteous offspring perished !  
has she won  
Nothing but garlands for the graves,  
from Fate ?

Nothing but death-songs ? Yes, be  
it understood  
Life throbs in noble Piedmont ! while  
the feet

Of Rome's clay image, dabbled soft  
in blood,  
Grow flat with dissolution, and, as  
meet,

Will soon be shovelled off like  
other mud,  
To leave the passage free in church  
and street.

And I, who first took hope up in  
this song,  
Because a child was singing one . . .  
behold,

The hope and omen were not, hap-  
pily, wrong !  
Poets are soothsayers still, like those  
of old

Who studied flights of doves ; and  
creatures young  
And tender, mighty meanings may  
unfold.

The sun strikes through the win-  
dows, up the floor ;  
Stand out in it, my own young Flor-  
entine,

Not two years old, and let me see  
thee more !  
It grows along thy amber curls, to  
shine

Brighter than elsewhere. Now,  
look straight before,  
And fix thy brave blue English eyes  
on mine,

And from my soul, which fronts the  
future so,  
With unabashed and unabated gaze,  
Teach me to hope for, what the an-  
gels know

When they smile clear as thou dost,  
Down God's ways

With just alighted feet, between  
the snow  
And snowdrops, where a little lamb  
may graze,

Thou hast no fear, my lamb, about  
the road,

Albeit in our vain-glory we assume  
That, less than we have, thou hast  
learnt of God.

Stand out, my blue-eyed prophet !—  
thou to whom  
The earliest world-day light that  
ever flowed,

Through Casa Guidi windows  
chanced to come !

Now shake the glittering nimbus of  
thy hair,  
And be God's witness that the ele-  
mental

New springs of life are gushing  
everywhere  
To cleanse the water-courses, and  
prevent all

Concrete obstructions which infest  
the air !  
That earth's alive, and gentle or un-  
gentle

Motions within her signify but  
growth !—  
The ground swells greenest o'er the  
laboring moles.

Howe'er the uneasy world is vexed  
and wroth,  
Young children, lifted high on parent  
souls,

Look round them with a smile upon  
the mouth,  
And take for music every bell that  
tolls ;

(Who said we should be better if  
like these ?)  
But *we* sit murmuring for the future,  
though

Posterity is smiling on our knees,  
Convicting us of folly. Let us go—  
We will trust God. The blank in-  
terstices

Men take for ruins, he will build  
into  
With pillared marbles rare, or knit  
across

With generous arches, till the fane's  
complete.  
This world has no perdition, if  
some loss.

Such cheer I gather from thy smil-  
ing, sweet !

The selfsame cherub-faces which  
emboss  
The Veil, lean inward to the Merey-  
seat.

## POEMS BEFORE CONGRESS.

### NAPOLEON III. IN ITALY.

#### I.

EMPEROR, Emperor !  
From the centre to the shore,  
From the Seine back to the Rhine,  
Stood eight millions up and swore  
By their manhood's right divine  
So to elect and legislate,  
This man should renew the line  
Broken in a strain of fate,  
And leagued kings at Waterloo,  
When the people's hands let go.  
Emperor  
Evermore.

#### II.

With a universal shout  
They took the old regalia out  
From an open grave that day, —  
From a grave that would not close,  
Where the first Napoleon lay  
Expectant in repose,  
As still as Merlin, with his conquer-  
ing face  
Turned up in its unquenchable ap-  
peal  
To men and heroes of the advancing  
race,  
Prepared to set the seal  
Of what has been on what shall be.  
Emperor  
Evermore.

#### III.

The thinkers stood aside  
To let the nation act.  
Some hated the new-constituted fact  
Of empire, as pride treading on their  
pride.  
Some quailed, lest what was poison-  
ous in the past  
Should graft itself in that Druidic  
bough  
On this green Now.  
Some cursed, because at last  
The open heavens, to which they had  
looked in vain  
For many a golden fall of marvellous  
rain,

Were closed in brass; and some  
Wept on, because a gone thing could  
not come;  
And some were silent, doubting all  
things for  
That popular conviction, — evermore  
Emperor.

#### IV.

That day I did not hate,  
Nor doubt, nor quail, nor curse.  
I, reverencing the people, did not  
bate  
My reverence of their deed and ora-  
cle,  
Nor vainly prate  
Of better and of worse  
Against the great conclusion of their  
will.  
And yet, O voice and verse !  
Which God set in me to acclaim and  
sing  
Conviction, exaltation, aspiration,  
We gave no music to the patent thing,  
Nor spared a holy rhythm to throb  
and swim  
About the name of him  
Translated to the sphere of domina-  
tion  
By democratic passion.  
I was not used, at least,  
Nor can be, now or then,  
To stroke the ermine beast  
On any kind of throne  
(Though builded by a nation for its  
own.)  
And swell the surging choir for kings  
of men, —  
“Emperor  
Evermore.”

#### V.

But now, Napoleon, now,  
That, leaving far behind the purple  
throng  
Of vulgar monarchs, thou  
Tread'st higher in thy deed  
Than stair of throne can lead,

To help in the hour of wrong  
The broken hearts of nations to be  
strong, —

Now, lifted as thou art  
To the level of pure song,  
We stand to meet thee on these Al-  
pine snows.

And while the palpitating peaks  
break out  
Ecstatic from somnambular repose,  
With answers to the presence and  
the shout,

We, poets of the people, who take  
part

With elemental justice, natural  
right,

Join in our echoes also, nor refrain.

We meet thee, O Napoleon! at this  
height

At last, and find thee great enough to  
praise.

Receive the poet's chrism, which  
smells beyond

The priest's, and pass thy ways:  
An English poet warns thee to main-  
tain

God's word, not England's: let his  
truth be true

And all men liars! with his truth  
respond

To all men's lie. Exalt the sword,  
and smite

On that long auvil of the Apennine  
Where Austria forged the Italian  
chain in view

Of seven consenting nations, sparks  
of fine

Admonitory light,  
Till men's eyes wink before convic-  
tions new.

Flash in God's justice to the world's  
amaze,

Sublime Deliverer! after many days  
Found worthy of the deed thou art  
come to do —

Emperor  
Evermore.

## VI.

But Italy, my Italy,

Can it last — this gleam?

Can she live and be strong,

Or is it another dream,

Like the rest we have dreamed so  
long?

And shall it, must it, be,

That, after the battle-cloud has bro-  
ken,

She will die off again

Like the rain,

Or like a poet's song

Sung of her, sad at the end,

Because her name is Italy, —

Die, and count no friend?

Is it true, may it be spoken,

That she who has lain so still,

With a wound in her breast,

And a flower in her hand,

And a gravestone under her head,

While every nation at will

Beside her has dared to stand,

And flout her with pity and scorn,

Saying, "She is at rest,

She is fair, she is dead,

And, leaving room in her stead

To Us who are later born,

This is certainly best!"

Saying, "Alas, she is fair,

Very fair, but dead: give place,

And so we have room for the race."

— Can it be true, be true,

That she lives anew?

That she rises up at the shout of her  
sons,

At the trumpet of France,

And lives anew? Is it true

That she has not moved in a

trance,

As in Forty-eight?

When her eyes were troubled with  
blood

Till she knew not friend from foe,

Till her hand was caught in a strait

Of her erement, and baffled so

From doing the deed she would;

And her weak foot stumbled across

The grave of a king,

And down she dropt at heavy loss

And we gloomily covered her face,

and said,

"We have dreamed the thing:

She is not alive, but dead."

## VII.

Now, shall we say

Our Italy lives indeed?

And, if it were not for the beat and  
bray

Of drum and trump of martial men,  
Should we feel the underground heave  
and strain,

Where heroes left their dust as a  
seed

Sure to emerge one day?

And, if it were not for the rhythmic  
march

Of France and Piedmont's double  
 hosts,  
 Should we hear the ghosts  
 Thrill through ruined aisle and arch,  
 Throb along the frescoed wall,  
 Whisper an oath by that divine  
 They left in picture, book, and  
 stone,  
 That Italy is not dead at all?  
 Ay, if it were not for the tears in our  
 eyes, —  
 These tears of a sudden passionate  
 joy —  
 Should we see her arise  
 From the place where the wicked are  
 overthrown,  
 Italy, Italy? loosed at length  
 From the tyrant's thrall,  
 Pale and calm in her strength?  
 Pale as the silver cross of Savoy  
 When the hand that bears the flag is  
 brave,  
 And not a breath is stirring, save  
 What is blown  
 Over the war-trump's lip of brass,  
 Ere Garibaldi forces the pass!

VIII.

Ay, it is so, even so.  
 Ay, and it shall be so.  
 Each broken stone that long ago  
 She flung behind her as she went  
 In discouragement and bewilderment  
 Through the cairns of Time, and  
 missed her way  
 Between to-day and yesterday,  
 Up springs a living man.  
 And each man stands with his face in  
 the light  
 Of his own drawn sword,  
 Ready to do what a hero can.  
 Wall to sap, or river to ford,  
 Cannon to front, or foe to pursue, —  
 Still ready to do, and sworn to be  
 true,  
 As a man and a patriot can.  
 Piedmontese, Neapolitan,  
 Lombard, Tuscan, Romagnole,  
 Each man's body having a soul, —  
 Count how many they stand,  
 All of them sons of the land,  
 Every live man there  
 Allied to a dead man below,  
 And the deadest with blood to spare  
 To quicken a living hand  
 In ease it should ever be slow.  
 Count how many they come  
 To the beat of Piedmont's drum,

With faces keener and grayer  
 Than swords of the Austrian slayer,  
 All set against the foe.  
 "Emperor  
 Evermore."

IX.

Out of the dust, where they ground  
 them;  
 Out of the holes, where they dogged  
 them;  
 Out of the hulks, where they wound  
 them  
 In iron, tortured and flogged them;  
 Out of the streets, where they chased  
 them,  
 Taxed them, and then bayoneted  
 them;  
 Out of the homes, where they spied  
 on them,  
 (Using their daughters and wives:)  
 Out of the church where they fret-  
 ted them,  
 Rotted their souls and debased them,  
 Trained them to answer with  
 knives,  
 Then cursed them all at their pray-  
 ers;  
 Out of cold lands, not theirs,  
 Where they exiled them, starved  
 them, lied on them, —  
 Back they come like a wind, in vain  
 Cramped up in the hills, that roars  
 its road  
 The stronger into the open plain;  
 Or like a fire that burns the hotter  
 And longer for the crust of cinder,  
 Serving better the ends of the potter;  
 Or like a restrained word of God,  
 Fulfilling itself by what seems to  
 hinder.  
 "Emperor  
 Evermore."

X.

Shout for France and Savoy!  
 Shout for the helper and doer.  
 Shout for the good sword's ring,  
 Shout for the thought still truer.  
 Shout for the spirits at large  
 Who passed for the dead this spring,  
 Whose living glory is sure.  
 Shout for France and Savoy!  
 Shout for the council and charge!  
 Shout for the head of Cavour;  
 And shout for the heart of a king  
 That's great with a nation's joy.  
 Shout for France and Savoy!

## XI.

Take up the child, Macmahon, though  
 Thy hand be red  
 From Magenta's dead,  
 And riding on, in front of the troop,  
 In the dust of the whirlwind of war,  
 Through the gate of the city of Milan,  
 stoop  
 And take up the child to thy saddle-  
 bow,  
 Nor fear the touch as soft as a flower  
 of his smile as clear as a star.  
 Thou hast a right to the child, we say,  
 Since the women are weeping for joy  
 as they  
 Who, by thy help and from this day,  
 Shall be happy mothers indeed.  
 They are raining flowers from terrace  
 and roof:  
 Take up the flower in the child.  
 While the shout goes up of a nation  
 freed  
 And heroically self-reconciled,  
 Till the snow on that peaked Alp  
 aloof  
 Starts, as feeling God's finger anew,  
 And all those cold white marble fires  
 Of mounting saints on the Duomo-  
 spires  
 Flicker against the Blue.  
 "Emperor  
 Evermore."

## XII.

Ay, it is he,  
 Who rides at the king's right hand!  
 Leave room to his horse, and draw to  
 the side,  
 Nor press too near in the ecstasy  
 Of a newly delivered impassioned land.  
 He is moved, you see, —  
 He who has done it all.  
 They call it a cold, stern face;  
 But this is Italy  
 Who rises up to her place! —  
 For this he fought in his youth,  
 Of this he dreamed in the past;  
 The lines of the resolute mouth  
 Tremble a little at last.  
 Cry, he has done it all!  
 "Emperor  
 Evermore."

## XIII.

It is not strange that he did it,  
 Though the deed may seem to strain  
 To the wonderful, unpermitted,  
 For such as lead and reign.

But he is strange, this man:  
 The people's instinct found him  
 (A wind in the dark that ran  
 Through a chink where was no door,)  
 And elected him and crowned him  
 Emperor  
 Evermore.

## XIV.

Autocrat! let them scoff,  
 Who fail to comprehend  
 That a ruler incarnate of  
 The people must transcend  
 All common king-born kings.  
 These subterranean springs  
 A sudden outlet winning  
 Have special virtues to spend.  
 The people's blood runs through him,  
 Dilates from head to foot,  
 Creates him absolute,  
 And from this great beginning  
 Evokes a greater end  
 To justify and renew him —  
 Emperor  
 Evermore.

## XV.

What! did any maintain  
 That God or the people (think!)  
 Could make a marvel in vain? —  
 Out of the water-jar there  
 Draw wine that none could drink?  
 Is this a man like the rest, —  
 This miracle, made unaware  
 By a rapture of popular air,  
 And caught to the place that was  
 best?  
 You think he could barter and cheat  
 As vulgar diplomats use,  
 With the people's heart in his breast?  
 Prate a lie into shape  
 Lest truth should cumber the road?  
 Play at the fast and loose  
 Till the world is strangled with  
 tape?  
 Maim the soul's complete  
 To fit the hole of a toad,  
 And filch the dogman's meat  
 To feed the offspring of God?

## XVI.

Nay, but he, this wonder,  
 He cannot palter nor prate,  
 Though many around him and under,  
 With intellects trained to the curve,  
 Distrust him in spirit and nerve  
 Because his meaning is straight.  
 Measure him, ere he depart,

With those who have governed and  
led, —  
Larger so much by the heart,  
Larger so much by the head.  
Emperor  
Evermore.

XVII.

He holds that, consenting or dissi-  
dent,  
Nations must move with the time;  
Assumes that crime with a precedent  
Doubles the guilt of the crime;  
— Denies that a slaver's bond,  
Or a treaty signed by knaves,  
(*Quorum magna pars* and beyond  
Was one of an honest name)  
Gives an inexpugnable claim  
To abolish men into slaves.  
Emperor  
Evermore.

XVIII.

He will not swagger, nor boast  
Of his country's meeds, in a tone  
Missuiting a great man most,  
If such should speak of his own;  
Nor will he act on her side  
From motives baser, indeed,  
Than a man of a noble pride  
Can avow for himself at need;  
Never, for lucre or laurels,  
Or custom, though such should be  
rife,  
Adapting the smaller morals  
To measure the larger life.  
He, though the merchants persuade,  
And the soldiers are eager for strife,  
Finds not his country in quarrels  
Only to find her in trade;  
While still he accords her such honor  
As never to flinch for her sake  
Where men put service upon her,  
Found heavy to undertake,  
And scarcely like to be paid;  
Believing a nation may act  
Unselfishly, shiver a lancee  
(As the least of her sons may, in fact,)  
And not for a cause of finance.  
Emperor  
Evermore.

XIX.

Great is he  
Who uses his greatness for all.  
His name shall stand perpetually  
As a name to applaud and cherish,  
Not only within the civic wall

For the loyal, but also without  
For the generous and free.  
Just is he  
Who is just for the popular due  
As well as the private debt.  
The praise of nations ready to perish  
Fall on him, — crown him in view  
Of tyrants caught in the net,  
And statesmen dizzy with fear and  
doubt!  
And though, because they are many,  
And he is merely one,  
And nations selfish and cruel  
Heap up the inquisitor's fuel  
To kill the body of high intents,  
And burn great deeds from their  
place,  
Till this, the greatest of any,  
May seem imperfectly done;  
Courage, whoever circumvents!  
Courage, courage, whoever is base!  
The soul of a high intent, be it known,  
Can die no more than any soul  
Which God keeps by him under  
the throne;  
And this, at whatever interim,  
Shall live, and be consummated  
Into the being of deeds made whole.  
Courage, courage! happy is he  
Of whom (himself among the dead  
And silent), this word shall be said:  
— That he might have had the world  
with him,  
But chose to side with suffering  
men,  
And had the world against him  
when  
He came to deliver Italy.  
Emperor  
Evermore.

THE DANCE.

I.

You remember down at Florence our  
Cascine,  
Where the people on the feast-days  
walk and drive,  
And through the trees, long-drawn in  
many a green way,  
O'er-roofing hum and murmur like  
a hive,  
The river and the mountains look  
alive?

## II.

You remember the piazzone there, the  
stand-place  
Of carriages a-brim with Florence  
beauties,  
Who lean and melt to music as the  
band plays,  
Or smile and chat with some one  
who afoot is,  
Or on horseback, in observance of  
male duties?

## III.

'Tis so pretty, in the afternoons of  
summer,  
So many gracious faces brought to-  
gether!  
Call it rout, or call it concert, they  
have come here,  
In the floating of the fan and of the  
feather,  
To reciprocate with beauty the fine  
weather.

## IV.

While the flower-girls offer nosegays  
(because *they* too  
Go with other sweets) at every car-  
riage-door;  
Here, by shake of a white finger,  
signed away to  
Some next buyer, who sits buying  
score on score,  
Piling roses upon roses evermore.

## V.

And last season, when the French  
camp had its station  
In the meadow-ground, things  
quickened and grew gayer  
Through the mingling of the liberat-  
ing nation  
With this people; groups of French-  
men everywhere,  
Strolling, gazing, judging lightly —  
"who was fair."

## VI.

Then the noblest lady present took  
upon her  
To speak nobly from her carriage  
for the rest:  
"Pray these officers from France to  
do us honor  
By dancing with us straightway."  
The request  
Was gravely apprehended as ad-  
drest.

## VII.

And the men of France bareheaded,  
bowing lowly,  
Led out each a proud signora to the  
space  
Which the startled crowd had round-  
ed for them — slowly,  
Just a touch of still emotion in his  
face,  
Not presuming, through the symbol,  
on the grace.

## VIII.

There was silence in the people: some  
lips trembled,  
But none jested. Broke the music  
at a glance;  
And the daughters of our princes,  
thus assembled,  
Stepped the measure with the gal-  
lant sons of France,  
Hush! it might have been a Mass,  
and not a dance.

## IX.

And they danced there till the blue  
that overskied us  
Swooned with passion, though the  
footing seemed sedate;  
And the mountains, heaving mighty  
hearts beside us,  
Sighed a rapture in a shadow, to  
dilate,  
And touch the holy stone where  
Dante sate.

## X.

Then the sons of France bareheaded,  
lowly bowing,  
Led the ladies back where kinsmen  
of the south  
Stood, received them; till, with burst  
of overflowing  
Feeling, husbands, brothers, Flor-  
ence's male youth,  
Turned and kissed the martial  
strangers mouth to mouth.

## XI.

And a cry went up, — a cry from all  
that people!  
— You have heard a people cheer-  
ing, you suppose,  
For the member, mayor . . . with  
chorus from the steeple?  
This was different, scarce as loud  
perhaps (who knows?)  
For we saw wet eyes around us ere  
the close.





“While the flower-girls offer nosegays  
— at every carriage door.” — Page 468.



## XII.

And we felt as if a nation, too long  
borne in  
By hard wrongers, — comprehend-  
ing in such attitude  
That God had spoken somewhere  
since the morning,  
That men were somehow brothers,  
by no platitude,  
Cried exultant in great wonder and  
free gratitude.

## A TALE OF VILLAGRANCA.

## TOLD IN TUSCANY.

## I.

My little son, my Florentine,  
Sit down beside my knee,  
And I will tell you why the sign  
Of joy which flushed our Italy  
Has faded since but yesternight,  
And why your Florence of delight  
Is mourning, as you see.

## II.

A great man (who was crowned one  
day)  
Imagined a great deed:  
He shaped it out of cloud and clay;  
He touched it finely, till the seed  
Possessed the flower; from heart and  
brain  
He fed it with large thoughts humane,  
To help a people's need.

## III.

He brought it out into the sun:  
They blessed it to his face:  
"O great pure deed, that hast un-  
done  
So many bad and base!  
O generous deed, heroic deed,  
Come forth, be perfected, succeed,  
Deliver by God's grace."

## IV.

Then sovereigns, statesmen, north and  
south,  
Rose up in wrath and fear,  
And cried, protesting by one mouth,  
"What monster have we here?  
A great deed at this hour of day?  
A great just deed, and not for pay?  
Absurd — or insincere.

## V.

"And if sincere, the heavier blow  
In that case we shall bear,  
For where's our blessed 'status quo'?  
Our holy treaties, where?  
Our rights to sell a race, or buy,  
Protect and pillage, occupy,  
And civilize despair?"

## VI.

Some muttered that the great deed  
meant  
A great pretext to sin;  
And others, the pretext, so lent,  
Was heinous (to begin).  
Volcanic terms of "great" and  
"just"?  
Admit such tongues of flame, the crust  
Of time and law falls in.

## VII.

A great deed in this world of ours?  
Unheard of the pretence is!  
It threatens plainly the great Powers,  
Is fatal in all senses.  
A just deed in the world? — Call out  
The rifles! be not slack about  
The national defences.

## VIII.

And many murmured, "From this  
source  
What red blood must be poured!"  
And some rejoined, "'Tis even worse:  
What red tape is ignored!"  
All cursed the doer for an evil  
Called here enlarging on the Devil;  
There monkeying the Lord.

## IX.

Some said it could not be explained;  
Some, could not be excused;  
And others, "Leave it unrestrained,  
Gehenna's self is loosed."  
And all cried, "Crush it, maim it,  
gag it,  
Set dog-toothed lies to tear it ragged,  
Truncated and traduced!"

## X.

But HE stood sad before the sun,  
(The peoples felt their fate.)  
"The world is many; I am one:  
My great deed was too great.  
God's fruit of justice ripens slow:  
Men's souls are narrow; let them grow.  
My brothers, we must wait."

## XI.

The tale is ended, child of mine,  
 Turned graver at my knee.  
 They say your eyes, my Florentine,  
 Are English: it may be;  
 And yet I've marked as blue a pair  
 Following the doves across the square  
 At Venice by the sea.

## XII.

Ah child! ah child! I cannot say  
 A word more. You conceive  
 The reason now, why just to-day  
 We see our Florence grieve.  
 Ah child, look up into the sky!  
 In this low world, where great deeds  
 die,  
 What matter if we live?

## A COURT LADY.

## I.

HER hair was tawny with gold: her  
 eyes with purple were dark;  
 Her cheeks' pale opal burnt with a  
 red and restless spark.

## II.

Never was lady of Milan nobler in  
 name and in race;  
 Never was lady of Italy fairer to see  
 in the face.

## III.

Never was lady on earth more true  
 as woman and wife,  
 Larger in judgment and instinct,  
 prouder in manners and life.

## IV.

She stood in the early morning, and  
 said to her maidens, "Bring  
 That silken robe made ready to wear  
 at the court of the king.

## V.

"Bring me the clasps of diamond,  
 lucid, clear of the mote;  
 Clasp me the large at the waist, and  
 clasp me the small at the throat.

## VI.

"Diamonds to fasten the hair, and  
 diamonds to fasten the sleeves,  
 Laces to drop from their rays, like a  
 powder of snow from the eaves."

## VII.

Gorgeous she entered the sunlight,  
 which gathered her up in a  
 flame,  
 While, straight in her open carriage,  
 she to the hospital came.

## VIII.

In she went at the door, and gazing  
 from end to end,  
 "Many and low are the pallets; but  
 each is the place of a friend."

## IX.

Up she passed through the wards,  
 and stood at a young man's bed:  
 Bloody the band on his brow, and  
 livid the droop of his head.

## X.

"Art thou a Lombard, my brother?  
 Happy art thou!" she cried,  
 And smiled like Italy on him: he  
 dreamed in her face — and died.

## XI.

Pale with his passing soul, she went  
 on still to a second:  
 He was a grave hard man, whose  
 years by dungeons were reck-  
 oned.

## XII.

Wounds in his body were sore,  
 wounds in his life were sorer.  
 "Art thou a Romagnole?" Her  
 eyes drove lightnings before  
 her.

## XIII.

"Austrian and priest had joined to  
 double and tighten the cord  
 Able to bind thee, O strong one, free  
 by the stroke of a sword.

## XIV.

"Now be grave for the rest of us,  
 using the life overcast  
 To ripen our wine of the present  
 (too new) in glooms of the  
 past."

## XV.

Down she stepped to a pallet where  
lay a face like a girl's,  
Young, and pathetic with dying, — a  
deep black hole in the curls.

## XVI.

“Art thou from Tuscany, brother?  
and seest thou, dreaming in  
pain,  
Thy mother stand in the piazza,  
searching the list of the slain?”

## XVII.

Kind as a mother herself, she touched  
his cheeks with her hands:  
“Blessed is she who has borne thee,  
although she should weep as  
she stands.”

## XVIII.

On she passed to a Frenchman, his  
arm carried off by a ball:  
Kneeling, “O more than my brother!  
how shall I thank thee for all?”

## XIX.

“Each of the heroes around us has  
fought for his land and line;  
But thou hast fought for a stranger,  
in hate of a wrong not thine.

## XX.

“Happy are all free peoples, too  
strong to be dispossessed;  
But blessed are those among nations  
who dare to be strong for the  
rest.”

## XXI.

Ever she passed on her way, and  
came to a couch where pined  
One with a face from Venetia, white  
with a hope out of mind.

## XXII.

Long she stood and gazed, and twice  
she tried at the name;  
But two great crystal tears were all  
that faltered and came.

## XXIII.

Only a tear for Venice? She turned  
as in passion and loss,  
And stooped to his forehead and  
kissed it, as if she were kissing  
the cross.

## XXIV.

Faint with that strain of heart, she  
moved on then to another,  
Stern and strong in his death. “And  
dost thou suffer, my brother?”

## XXV.

Holding his hands in hers: “Out of  
the Piedmont lion  
Cometh the sweetness of freedom!  
sweetest to live or to die on.”

## XXVI.

Holding his cold rough hands: “Well,  
oh, well have ye done  
In noble, noble Piedmont, who would  
not be noble alone.”

## XXVII.

Back he fell while she spoke. She  
rose to her feet with a spring,  
“That was a Piedmontese! and this  
is the court of the King.”

## AN AUGUST VOICE.

“Una voce augusta.” —  
MONITORE TOSCANO.

## I.

You'll take back your Grand-duke?  
I made the treaty upon it.  
Just venture a quiet rebuke;  
Dall' Ongaro write him a sonnet;  
Ricasoli gently explain  
Some need of the constitution:  
He'll swear to it over again,  
Providing an “easy solution.”  
You'll call back the Grand-duke.

## II.

You'll take back your Grand-duke?  
I promised the Emperor Francis  
To argue the case by his book,  
And ask you to meet his advances.  
The ducal cause, we know,  
(Whether you or he be the wronger.)  
Has very strong points, although  
Your bayonets there have stronger.  
You'll call back the Grand-duke.

## III.

You'll take back your Grand-duke?  
 He is not pure altogether.  
 For instance, the oath which he took  
 (In the Forty-eight rough weather)  
 He'd "nail your flag to his mast,"  
 Then softly scuttled the boat you  
 Hoped to escape in at last,  
 And both by a "Proprio motu."  
 You'll call back the Grand-duke.

## IV.

You'll take back your Grand-duke?  
 The scheme meets nothing to shock  
 it  
 In this smart letter, look,  
 We found in Radetsky's pocket;  
 Where his Highness in sprightly style  
 Of the flower of his Tuscans wrote,  
 "These heads be the hottest in file;  
 Pray shoot them the quickest."  
 Quote,  
 And call back the Grand-duke.

## V.

You'll take back your Grand-duke?  
 There *are* some things to object to.  
 He cheated, betrayed, and forsook,  
 Then called in the foe to protect  
 you.  
 He taxed you for wines and for meats  
 Throughout that eight years' pas-  
 time  
 Of Austria's drum in your streets.  
 Of course you remember the last  
 time  
 You called back your Grand-duke.

## VI.

You'll take back the Grand-duke?  
 It is not race he is poor in,  
 Although he never could brook  
 The patriot cousin at Turin.  
 His love of kin you discern,  
 By his hate of your flag and me —  
 So decidedly apt to turn  
 All colors at the sight of the three.<sup>1</sup>  
 You'll call back the Grand-duke.

## VII.

You'll take back your Grand-duke?  
 'Twas weak that he fled from the  
 Pitti;  
 But consider how little he shook  
 At thought of bombarding your city!

<sup>1</sup> The Italian tricolor, — red, green, and white.

And, balancing that with this,  
 The Christian rule is plain for us;  
 . . . Or the Holy Father's Swiss  
 Have shot his Perugians in vain for  
 us.  
 You'll call back the Grand-duke.

## VIII.

Pray take back your Grand-duke.  
 — I, too, have suffered persuasion.  
 All Europe, raven and rook,  
 Screeched at me armed for your  
 nation.  
 Your cause in my heart struck spurs:  
 I swept such warnings aside for you:  
 My very child's eyes, and hers,  
 Grew like my brother's who died  
 for you.  
 You'll call back the Grand-duke.

## IX.

You'll take back your Grand-duke?  
 My French fought nobly with rea-  
 son, —  
 Left many a Lombardy nook  
 Red as with wine out of season.  
 Little we grudged what was done  
 there,  
 Paid freely your ransom of blood:  
 Our heroes stark in the sun there,  
 We would not recall if we could.  
 You'll call back the Grand-duke.

## X.

You'll take back your Grand-duke?  
 His son rode fast as he got off  
 That day on the enemy's hook,  
 When *I* had an epaulet shot off.  
 Though splashed (as I saw him afar,  
 no,  
 Near) by those ghastly rains,  
 The mark, when you've washed him  
 in Arno,  
 Will scarcely be larger than Cain's.  
 You'll call back the Grand-duke.

## XI.

You'll take back your Grand-duke?  
 'Twill be so simple, quite beautiful:  
 The shepherd recovers his crook,  
 . . . If you should be sheep, and  
 dutiful.  
 I spoke a word worth chalking  
 On Milan's wall — but stay,  
 Here's Poniatowsky talking, —  
 You'll listen to *him* to-day,  
 And call back the Grand-duke.

## XII.

You'll take back your Grand-duke ?  
 Observe, there's no one to force it,  
 Unless the Madonna, St. Luke  
 Drew for you, choose to indorse it.  
 I charge you by great St. Martino,  
 And prodigies quickened by wrong,  
 Remember your dead on Ticino;  
 Be worthy, be constant, be strong.  
 — Bah ! — call back the Grand-duke !

## CHRISTMAS GIFTS.

ὡς βασιλει, ὡς θεῷ, ὡς νεκρῷ.

GREGORY NAZIANZEN.

## I.

THE Pope on Christmas Day  
 Sits in St. Peter's chair;  
 But the peoples murmur, and say,  
 "Our souls are sick and forlorn,  
 And who will show us where  
 Is the stable where Christ was  
 born ?"

## II.

The star is lost in the dark;  
 The manger is lost in the straw:  
 The Christ cries faintly . . . hark ! —  
 Through bands that swaddle and  
 strangle —  
 But the Pope in the chair of awe  
 Looks down the great quadrangle.

## III.

The magi kneel at his foot,  
 Kings of the east and west;  
 But, instead of the angels (mute  
 Is the "Peace on earth" of their  
 song),  
 The peoples, perplexed and opprest,  
 Are sighing, "How long! how  
 long!"

## IV.

And, instead of the kine, bewilder in  
 Shadow of aisle and dome,  
 The bear who tore up the children,  
 The fox who burnt up the corn,  
 And the wolf who suckled at Rome  
 Brothers to slay and to scorn.

## V.

Cardinals left and right of him,  
 Worshippers round and beneath,  
 The silver trumpets at sight of him,  
 Thrill with a musical blast:  
 But the people say through their  
 teeth,  
 "Trumpets? we wait for the  
 Last!"

## VI.

He sits in the place of the Lord,  
 And asks for the gifts of the time, —  
 Gold, for the haft of a sword,  
 To win back Romagna averse,  
 Incense to sweeten a crime,  
 And myrrh to imbitter a curse.

## VII.

Then a king of the west said, "Good !  
 I bring thee the gifts of the time, —  
 Red, for the patriot's blood;  
 Green, for the martyr's crown;  
 White for the dew and the rime,  
 When the morning of God comes  
 down."

## VIII.

— O mystic tricolor bright !  
 The Pope's heart quailed like a  
 man's:  
 The cardinals froze at the sight,  
 Bowing their tonsures hoary;  
 And the eyes in the peacock-fans  
 Winked at the alien glory.

## IX.

But the peoples exclaimed in hope,  
 "Now blessed be he who has  
 brought  
 These gifts of the time to the Pope,  
 When our souls were sick and for-  
 lorn;  
 — And *here* is the star we sought,  
 To show us where Christ was  
 born!"

## ITALY AND THE WORLD.

## I.

FLORENCE, Bologna, Parma, Modena,  
 When you named them a year ago,  
 So many graves reserved by God, in a  
 Day of Judgment, you seemed to  
 know,  
 To open and let out the resurrection.

## II.

And meantime (you made your reflection,  
If you were English) was nought to be done  
But sorting sables, in predilection  
For all those martyrs dead and gone,  
Till the new earth and heaven made ready.

## III.

And if your politics were not heady,  
Violent . . . "Good," you added,  
"good  
In all things! mourn on sure and steady.  
Churchyard thistles are wholesome food  
For our European wandering asses.

## IV.

"The date of the resurrection passes  
Human foreknowledge: men unborn  
Will gain by it (even in the lower classes):  
But none of these. It is not the morn  
Because the cock of France is crowing.

## V.

"Cocks crow at midnight, seldom knowing  
Starlight from dawn-light. 'Tis a mad  
Poor creature." Here you paused,  
and growing  
Scornful, suddenly, let us add,  
The trumpet sounded, the graves were open.

## VI.

Life and life and life! agroped in  
The dusk of death, warm hands stretched out  
For swords, proved more life still to hope in,  
Beyond and behind. Arise with a shout,  
Nation of Italy, slain and buried!

## VII.

Hill to hill, and turret to turret,  
Flashing the tricolor, — newly created  
Beautiful Italy, calm, unburied,  
Rise heroic and renovated,  
Rise to the final restitution.

## VIII.

Rise; prefigure the grand solution  
Of earth's municipal, insular schisms,  
Statesmen draping self-love's conclusion  
In cheap vernacular patriotisms,  
Unable to give up Judæa for Jesus.

## IX.

Bring us the higher example; release us  
Into the larger coming time;  
And into Christ's broad garment piece us  
Rags of virtue as poor as crime,  
National selfishness, civic vaunting.

## X.

No more Jew nor Greek then, taunting  
Nor taunted; no more England nor France!  
But one confederate brotherhood planting  
One flag only to mark the advance,  
Onward and upward, of all humanity

## XI.

For civilization perfected  
Is fully developed Christianity.  
"Measure the frontier," shall it be said,  
"Count the ships," in national vanity?  
— Count the nation's heart-beats sooner.

## XII.

For, though behind by a cannon or schooner,  
That nation still is predominant,  
Whose pulse beats quickest in zeal to oppugn or  
Succor another, in wrong or want,  
Passing the frontier in love and abhorrence.

## XIII.

Modena, Parma, Bologna, Florence,  
Open us out the wider way!  
Dwarf in that chapel of old St. Lawrence  
Your Michel Angelo's giant Day,  
With the grandeur of this Day breaking o'er us!



XIV.

Ye who, restrained as an ancient chorus,  
Mute while the coryphaeus spake,  
Hush your separate voices before us,  
Sink your separate lives for the sake  
Of one sole Italy's living forever!

XV.

Givers of coat and cloak too, — never  
Grudging that purple of yours at  
the best, —  
By your heroic will and endeavor  
Each sublimely dispossess,  
That all may inherit what each sur-  
renders!

XVI.

Earth shall bless you, O noble emend-  
ers  
On egotist nations! Ye shall lead  
The plough of the world, and sow  
new splendors  
Into the furrow of things for seed,  
Ever the richer for what ye have  
given.

XVII.

Lead us and teach us, till earth and  
heaven  
Grow larger around us, and higher  
above.  
Our sacrament bread has a bitter  
leaven;  
We bait our traps with the name of  
love,  
Till hate itself has a kinder meaning.

XVIII.

Oh, this world: this cheating, and  
screening  
Of cheats! this conscience for can-  
dle-wicks,  
Not beacon-fires! this over-weening  
Of underhand diplomatical tricks,  
Dared for the country while scorned  
for the counter!

XIX.

Oh, this envy of those who mount  
here,  
And oh, this malice to make them  
trip!  
Rather quenching the fire there, dry-  
ing the fount here,  
To frozen body and thirsty lip,  
Than leave to a neighbor their minis-  
tration.

XX.

I cry aloud in my poet-passion,  
Viewing my England o'er Alp and  
sea.  
I loved her more in her ancient fash-  
ion:  
She carries her rifles too thick for  
me,  
Who spares them so in the cause of a  
brother.

XXI.

Suspicion, panic? end this pother.  
The sword kept sheathless at peace-  
time rusts.  
None fears for himself while he feels  
for another:  
The brave man either fights or  
trusts,  
And wears no mail in his private  
chamber.

XXII.

Beautiful Italy! golden amber  
Warm with the kisses of lover and  
traitor!  
Thou who hast drawn us on to re-  
member,  
Draw us to hope now: let us be  
greater  
By this new future than that old  
story,

XXIII.

Till truer glory replaces all glory,  
As the torch grows blind at the  
dawn of day;  
And the nations, rising up, their  
sorry  
And foolish sins shall put away,  
As children their toys when the  
teacher enters.

XXIV.

Till Love's one centre devour these  
centres  
Of many self-loves; and the patri-  
ot's trick  
To better his land by egotist ven-  
tures,  
Defamed from a virtue, shall make  
men sick,  
As the scalp at the belt of some red  
hero.

XXV.

For certain virtues have dropped to  
zero,  
Left by the sun on the mountain's  
dewy side;

Churchman's charities, tender as  
Nero,  
Indian suttee, heathen suicide,  
Service to rights divine proved hol-  
low:

## XXVI.

And Heptarechy patriotisms must fol-  
low.  
— National voices, distinct yet de-  
pendent,  
Enspiring each other, as swallow  
does swallow,  
With circles still widening and  
ever ascendent,  
In multifiform life to united progres-  
sion, —

## XXVII.

These shall remain. And when in  
the session  
Of nations, the separate language is  
heard,  
Each shall aspire, in sublime indis-  
cretion,  
To help with a thought or exalt  
with a word  
Less her own than her rival's honor.

## XXVIII.

Each Christian nation shall take upon  
her  
The law of the Christian man in  
vast:  
The crown of the getter shall fall to  
the donor,  
And last shall be first while first  
shall be last,  
And to love best shall still be to reign  
unsurpassed.

## A CURSE FOR A NATION.

## PROLOGUE.

I HEARD an angel speak last night,  
And he said, "Write! —  
Write a nation's curse for me,  
And send it over the Western Sea."

I faltered, taking up the word:  
"Not so, my lord!  
If curses must be, choose another  
To send thy curse against my brother.

"For I am bound by gratitude,  
By love and blood,  
To brothers of mine across the sea,  
Who stretch out kindly hands to me."

"Therefore," the voice said, "shalt  
thou write  
My curse to-night.  
From the summits of love a curse is  
driven,  
As lightning is from the tops of  
heaven."

"Not so," I answered. "Evermore  
My heart is sore  
For my own land's sins: for little  
feet  
Of children bleeding along the street:

"For parked-up honors that gainsay  
The right of way:  
For almsgiving through a door that is  
Not open enough for two friends to  
kiss:

"For love of freedom which abates  
Beyond the Straits:  
For patriot virtue starved to vice on  
Self-praise, self-interest, and suspi-  
cion:

"For an oligarchic parliament,  
And bribes well-meant.  
What curse to another land assign,  
When heavy-souled for the sins of  
mine?"

"Therefore," the voice said, "shalt  
thou write  
My curse to-night.  
Because thou hast strength to see and  
hate  
A foul thing done *within* thy gate."

"Not so," I answered once again.  
"To curse choose men.  
For I, a woman, have only known  
How the heart melts, and the tears  
run down."

"Therefore," the voice said, "shalt  
thou write  
My curse to-night.  
Some women weep and curse, I say,  
(And no one marvels) night and day.

"And thou shalt take their part to-  
night,  
Weep and write.

A curse from the depths of woman-  
hood  
Is very salt, and bitter, and good."

So thus I wrote, and mourned indeed,  
What all may read.  
And thus as was enjoined on me,  
I send it over the Western Sea.

## THE CURSE.

## I.

Because ye have broken your own  
chain  
With the strain  
Of brave men climbing a nation's  
height,  
Yet thence bear down with brand and  
thong  
On souls of others, — for this wrong  
This is the curse. Write.

Because yourselves are standing  
straight  
In the state  
Of Freedom's foremost acolyte,  
Yet keep calm footing all the time  
On writhing bond-slaves, — for this  
crime  
This is the curse. Write.

Because ye prosper in God's name,  
With a claim  
To honor in the old world's sight,  
Yet do the fiend's work perfectly  
In strangling martyrs, — for this lie  
This is the curse. Write.

## II.

Ye shall watch while kings conspire  
Round the people's smouldering fire,  
And, warm for your part,  
Shall never dare — O shame!  
To utter the thought into flame  
Which burns at your heart.  
This is the curse. Write.

Ye shall watch while nations strive  
With the bloodhounds, die or survive,  
Drop faint from their jaws,

Or throttle them backward to death;  
And only under your breath  
Shall favor the cause.  
This is the curse. Write.

Ye shall watch while strong men  
draw  
The nets of feudal law  
To strangle the weak;  
And, counting the sin for a sin,  
Your soul shall be sadder within  
Than the word ye shall speak.  
This is the curse. Write.

When good men are praying erect  
That Christ may avenge his elect,  
And deliver the earth,  
The prayer in your ears, said low,  
Shall sound like the tramp of a foe  
That's driving you forth.  
This is the curse. Write.

When wise men give you their  
praise,  
They shall pause in the heat of the  
phrase,  
As if carried too far.  
When ye boast your own charters  
kept true,  
Ye shall blush; for the thing which ye  
do  
Derides what ye are.  
This is the curse. Write.

When fools cast taunts at your gate,  
Your scorn ye shall somewhat abate  
As ye look o'er the wall:  
For your conscience, tradition, and  
name  
Explode with a deadlier blame  
Than the worst of them all.  
This is the curse. Write.

Go, wherever ill deeds shall be  
done,  
Go, plant your flag in the sun  
Beside the ill-doers!  
And recoil from clenching the curse  
Of God's witnessing Universe  
With a curse of yours.  
This is the curse. Write.

## LAST POEMS.

### ADVERTISEMENT.

THESE poems are given as they occur on a list drawn up last June. A few had already been printed in periodicals.

There is hardly such direct warrant for publishing the translations, which were only intended, many years ago, to accompany and explain certain engravings after ancient gems, in the projected work of a friend, by whose kindness they are now recovered; but, as two of the original series (the "Adonis" of Bion, and "Song to the Rose," from Achilles Tatius) have subsequently appeared, it is presumed that the remainder may not improperly follow.

A single recent version is added.

LONDON, February, 1862.

### LITTLE MATTIE

#### I.

DEAD! Thirteen a month ago!  
Short and narrow her life's walk  
Lover's love she could not know  
Even by a dream or talk:  
Too young to be glad of youth,  
Missing honor, labor, rest,  
And the warmth of a babe's mouth  
At the blossom of her breast.  
Must you pity her for this  
And for all the loss it is,  
You, her mother, with wet face,  
Having had all in your case?

#### II.

Just so young but yesternight,  
Now she is old as death.  
Meek, obedient in your sight,  
Gentle to a beck or breath  
Only on last Monday! Yours,  
Answering you like silver bells  
Lightly touched! An hour matures:  
You can teach her nothing else.  
She has seen the mystery hid  
Under Egypt's pyramid:  
By those eyelids pale and close  
Now she knows what Rhamses knows.

#### III.

Cross her quiet hands, and smooth  
Down her patient locks of silk,  
Cold and passive as in truth  
You your fingers in spilt milk  
Drew along a marble floor;  
But her lips you cannot wring  
Into saying a word more,  
"Yes," or "No," or such a thing:  
Though you call and beg and wreak  
Half your soul out in a shriek,  
She will lie there in default  
And most innocent revolt.

#### IV.

Ay, and if she spoke, may be  
She would answer like the Son,  
"What is now 'twixt thee and me?"  
Dreadful answer! better none.  
Yours on Monday, God's to-day!  
Yours, your child, your blood, your  
heart,  
Called . . . you called her, did you  
say,  
"Little Mattie" for your part?  
Now already it sounds strange,  
And you wonder, in this change,  
What He calls his angel-creature,  
Higher up than you can reach her.

v.

'Twas a green and easy world  
As she took it; room to play,  
(Though one's hair might get uncurled  
At the far end of the day).  
What she suffered she shook off  
In the sunshine: what she sinned  
She could pray on high enough  
To keep safe above the wind.  
If reproved by God or you,  
'Twas to better her, she knew;  
And, if crossed, she gathered still  
'Twas to cross out something ill.

vi.

You, you had the right, you thought,  
To survey her with sweet scorn,  
Poor gay child, who had not caught  
Yet the octave-stretch forlorn  
Of your larger wisdom! Nay,  
Now your places are changed so,  
In that same superior way  
She regards you dull and low  
As you did herself exempt  
From life's sorrows. Grand contempt  
Of the spirits risen a while,  
Who look back with such a smile!

vii.

There's the sting of't. That, I think,  
Hurts the most a thousand-fold!  
To feel sudden, at a wink,  
Some dear child we used to scold,  
Praise, love both ways, kiss and tease,  
Teach, and tumble as our own  
All its curls about our knees,  
Rise up suddenly full-grown.  
Who could wonder such a sight  
Made a woman mad outright?  
Show me Michael with the sword  
Rather than such angels, Lord?

## A FALSE STEP.

i.

SWEET, thou hast trod on a heart.  
Pass; there's a world full of men;  
And women as fair as thou art  
Must do such things now and then.

ii.

Thou only hast stepped unaware;  
Malice, not one can impute;

And why should a heart have been  
there,  
In the way of a fair woman's foot?

iii.

It was not a stone that could trip,  
Nor was it a thorn that could rend:  
Put up thy proud underlip!  
'Twas merely the heart of a friend.

iv.

And yet, peradventure, one day  
Thou, sitting alone at the glass,  
Remarking the bloom gone away,  
Where the smile in its dimplement  
was,

v.

And seeking around thee in vain,  
From hundreds who flattered be-  
fore,  
Such a word as, "Oh, not in the main  
Do I hold thee less precious, but  
more!" . . .

vi.

Thou'lt sigh, very like, on thy part,  
"Of all I have known or can know,  
I wish I had only that heart  
I trod upon ages ago!"

## VOID IN LAW

i.

SLEEP, little babe, on my knee,  
Sleep, for the midnight is chill,  
And the moon has died out in the  
tree,  
And the great human world goeth  
ill.

Sleep, for the wicked agree:  
Sleep, let them do as they will.  
Sleep.

ii.

Sleep, thou hast drawn from my  
breast  
The last drop of milk that was good,  
And now, in a dream, suck the rest,  
Lest the real should trouble thy  
blood.

Suck, little lips dispossess,  
As we kiss in the air whom we  
would.  
Sleep.

## III.

O lips of thy father! the same,  
 So like! Very deeply they swore  
 When he gave me his ring and his  
     name,  
 To take back, I imagined, no more!  
 And now is all changed like a game,  
 Though the old cards are used as of  
 yore?  
 Sleep.

## IV.

"Void in law," said the courts.  
     Something wrong  
 In the forms? Yet, "till death part  
     us two,  
 I James take thee Jessie," was  
     strong,  
 And ONE witness competent. True  
 Such a marriage was worth an old  
     song,  
 Heard in heaven, though, as plain  
 as the New.  
 Sleep.

## V.

Sleep, little child, his and mine!  
 Her throat has the antelope curve,  
 And her cheek just the color and line  
 Which fade not before him nor  
     swerve;  
 Yet *she* has no child! the divine  
 Seal of right upon loves that de-  
     serve.  
 Sleep.

## VI.

My child! though the world take her  
     part,  
 Saying, "She was the woman to  
     choose,  
 He had eyes, was a man in his heart,"  
 We twain the decision refuse;  
 We . . . weak as I am, as thou art,  
 Cling on to him, never to loose.  
 Sleep.

## VII.

He thinks, that, when done with this  
     place,  
 All's ended? he'll new-stamp the  
     ore?  
 Yes, Cæsar's — but not in our case.  
 Let him learn we are waiting before  
 The grave's mouth, the heaven's gate,  
     God's face,  
 With implacable love evermore.  
 Sleep.

## VIII.

He's ours, though he kissed her but  
     now;  
 He's ours, though she kissed in re-  
     ply;  
 He's ours, though himself disavow,  
 And God's universe favor the lie, —  
 Ours to claim, ours to clasp, ours be-  
     low,  
 Ours above, . . . if we live, if we  
 die.  
 Sleep.

## IX.

Ah, baby, my baby, too rough  
 Is my lullaby? What have I said?  
 Sleep! When I've wept long enough  
 I shall learn to weep softly instead,  
 And piece with some alien stuff  
 My heart to lie smooth for thy head.  
 Sleep.

## X.

Two souls met upon thee, my sweet;  
 Two loves led thee out to the sun:  
 Alas, pretty hands, pretty feet,  
 If the one who remains (only one)  
 Set her grief at thee, turned in a heat  
 To thine enemy — were it well done?  
 Sleep.

## XI.

May He of the manger stand near  
 And love thee! An infant he came  
 To his own who rejected him here,  
 But the Magi brought gifts all the  
     same.  
 I hurry the cross on my dear!  
 My gifts are the griefs I declaim!  
 Sleep.

## LORD WALTER'S WIFE.

## I.

"BUT why do you go?" said the  
 lady, while both sate under the  
     yew,  
 And her eyes were alive in their  
 depth, as the kraken beneath  
 the sea-blue.

## II.

"Because I fear you," he answered;  
 "because you are far too fair,  
 And able to strangle my soul in a  
 mesh of your gold-colored hair."

## III.

"Oh, that," she said, "is no reason.  
Such knots are quickly undone,  
And too much beauty, I reckon, is  
nothing but too much sun."

## IV.

"Yet farewell so," he answered:  
"the sun-stroke's fatal at times.  
I value your husband, Lord Walter,  
whose gallop rings still from  
the limes."

## V.

"Oh, that," she said, "is no reason.  
You smell a rose through a  
fence:  
If two should smell it, what matter?  
who grumbles? and where's the  
pretence?"

## VI.

"But I," he replied, "have promised  
another, when love was free,  
To love her alone, alone, who alone  
and afar loves me."

## VII.

"Why, that," she said, "is no reason.  
Love's always free, I am told.  
Will you vow to be safe from the  
headache on Tuesday, and  
think it will hold?"

## VIII.

"But you," he replied, "have a  
daughter, a young little child,  
who was laid  
In your lap to be pure; so I leave  
you: the angels would make  
me afraid."

## IX.

"Oh, that," she said, "is no reason.  
The angels keep out of the way;  
And Dora, the child, observes nothing,  
although you should please  
me and stay."

## X.

At which he rose up in his anger.  
"Why, now you no longer are  
fair!  
Why, now you no longer are fatal,  
but ugly and hateful, I swear."

## XI.

At which she laughed out in her  
scorn: "These men! oh, these  
men overnice,  
Who are shocked if a color not virtu-  
ous is frankly put on by a vice."

## XII.

Her eyes blazed upon him: "And  
*you!* You bring us your vices  
so near  
That we smell them! You think in  
our presence a thought 'twould  
defame us to hear!

## XIII.

"What reason had you, and what  
right, — I appeal to your soul  
from my life, —  
To find me too fair as a woman?  
Why, sir, I am pure, and a wife.

## XIV.

"Is the daystar too fair up above  
you? It burns you not. Dare  
you imply  
I brushed you more close than the  
star does, when Walter had set  
me as high?"

## XV.

"If a man finds a woman too fair, he  
means simply adapted too much  
To uses unlawful and fatal. The  
praise! — shall I thank you for  
such?"

## XVI.

"Too fair? Not unless you misuse  
us? and surely, if once in a  
while  
You attain to it, straightway you call  
us no longer too fair, but too  
vile.

## XVII.

"A moment, — I pray your attention!  
— I have a poor word in my  
head  
I must utter, though womanly custom  
would set it down better un-  
said.

## XVIII.

"You grew, sir, pale to impertinence,  
once when I showed you a ring.  
You kissed my fan when I dropped  
it. No matter! — I've broken  
the thing.

## XIX.

"You did me the honor, perhaps, to  
be moved at my side now and  
then  
In the senses, — a vice, I have heard,  
which is common to beasts and  
some men.

## XX.

"Love's a virtue for heroes! — as  
white as the snow on high hills,  
And immortal, as every great soul is  
that struggles, endures, and ful-  
fils.

## XXI.

"I love my Walter profoundly, —  
you, Maude, though you faltered  
a week,  
For the sake of . . . what was it? an  
eyebrow? or, less still, a mole  
on a cheek?

## XXII.

"And since, when all's said, you're  
too noble to stoop to the frivo-  
lous cant  
About crimes irresistible, virtues that  
swindle, betray, and supplant,

## XXIII.

"I determined to prove to yourself,  
that, whate'er you might dream  
or avow  
By illusion, you wanted precisely no  
more of me than you have now.

## XXIV.

"There! Look me full in the face!  
— in the face. Understand, if  
you can,  
That the eyes of such women as I am  
are clean as the palm of a man.

## XXV.

"Drop his hand, you insult him.  
Avoid us for fear we should  
cost you a scar —  
You take us for harlots, I tell you,  
and not for the women we are.

## XXVI.

"You wronged me; but then I con-  
sidered . . . there's Walter!  
And so at the end,

I vowed that he should not be  
mulcted by me in the hand of  
a friend.

## XXVII.

"Have I hurt you indeed? We are  
quits, then. Nay, friend of my  
Walter, be mine!  
Come Dora, my darling, my angel,  
and help me to ask him to  
dine."

BIANCA AMONG THE  
NIGHTINGALES.

## I.

THE cypress stood up like a church  
That night we felt our love would  
hold,  
And saintly moonlight seemed to  
search  
And wash the whole world clean as  
gold;  
The olives crystallized the vales'  
Broad slopes until the hills grew  
strong;  
The fireflies and the nightingales  
Throbbed each to either, flame and  
song.  
The nightingales, the nightingales.

## II.

Upon the angle of its shade  
The cypress stood, self-balanced  
high;  
Half up, half down, as double-made,  
Along the ground, against the sky,  
And *we*, too! from such soul-height  
went  
Such leaps of blood, so blindly  
driven,  
We scarce knew if our nature meant  
Most passionate earth or intense  
heaven.  
The nightingales, the nightingales.

## III.

We paled with love, we shook with  
love,  
We kissed so close we could not  
vow;  
Till Giulio whispered, "Sweet, above  
God's Ever guarantees this Now."



And through his words the nightingales  
Drove straight and full their long,  
clear call,  
Like arrows through heroic mails,  
And love was awful in it all.  
The nightingales, the nightingales.

IV.

O cold, white moonlight of the north,  
Refresh these pulses, quench this  
hell!  
O coverture of death drawn forth  
Across this garden-chamber . .  
well!  
But what have nightingales to do  
In gloomy England, called the  
free . . .  
(Yes, free to die in! . . .) when we  
two  
Are Sundered, singing still to me?  
And still they sing, the nightingales.

V.

I think I hear him, how he cried  
"My own soul's life" between their  
notes.  
Each man has but one soul supplied,  
And that's immortal. Though his  
throat's  
On fire with passion now, to *her*  
He can't say what to me he said!  
And yet he moves her, they aver.  
The nightingales sing through my  
head,  
The nightingales, the nightingales.

VI.

He says to her what moves her most.  
He would not name his soul with-  
in  
Her hearing; rather pays her cost  
With praises to her lips and chin.  
Man has but one soul, 'tis ordained,  
And each soul but one love, I add;  
Yet souls are damned, and love's pro-  
faned.  
These nightingales will sing me  
mad!  
The nightingales, the nightingales.

VII.

I marvel how the birds can sing.  
There's little difference, in their  
view,  
Betwixt our Tuscan trees that spring  
As vital flames into the blue,

And dull, round blots of foliage meant  
Like saturated sponges here  
To suck the fogs up. As content  
Is he, too, in this land, tis clear.  
And still they sing, the nightingales.

VIII.

My native Florence! dear, foregone!  
I see across the Alpine ridge  
How the last feast-day of St. John  
Shot rockets from Carraia bridge.  
The luminous city, tall with fire,  
Trode deep down in that river of ours,  
While many a boat with lamp and  
choir  
Skimmed birdlike over glittering  
towers.  
I will not hear these nightingales.

IX.

I seem to float, *we* seem to float,  
Down Arno's stream in festive  
guise;  
A boat strikes flame into our boat,  
And up that lady seems to rise  
As then she rose. The shock had  
flashed  
A vision on us! What a head!  
What leaping eyeballs!—beauty  
dashed  
To splendor by a sudden dread.  
And still they sing, the nightingales.

X.

Too bold to sin, too weak to die:  
Such women are so. As for me,  
I would we had drowned there, he  
and I,  
That moment, loving perfectly.  
He had not caught her with her loosed  
Gold ringlets . . . rarer in the  
south . . .  
Nor heard the "Grazie tanto" bruised  
To sweetness by her English mouth.  
And still they sing, the nightingales.

XI.

She had not reached him at my heart  
With her fine tongue, as snakes in-  
deed  
Kill flies; nor had I, for my part,  
Yearned after, in my desperate  
need,  
And followed him, as he did her,  
To coasts left bitter by the tide,  
Whose very nightingales, elsewhere  
Delighting, torture and deride!  
For still they sing, the nightingales.

## XII.

A worthless woman, mere cold clay,  
As all false things are; but so fair,  
She takes the breath of men away  
Who gaze upon her unaware.  
I would not play her larcenous tricks  
To have her looks! She lied and  
stole,  
And spat into my love's pure pyx  
The rank saliva of her soul.  
And still they sing, the nightingales.

## XIII.

I would not for her white and pink,  
Though such he likes; her grace of  
limb,  
Though such he has praised; nor yet,  
I think,  
For life itself, though spent with  
him,—  
Commit such sacrilege, affront  
God's nature which is love, intrude  
'Twixt two affianced souls, and hunt  
Like spiders in the altar's wood.  
I cannot bear these nightingales.

## XIV.

If she chose sin, some gentler guise  
She might have sinned in, so it  
seems:  
She might have pricked out both my  
eyes,  
And I still seen him in my dreams!  
— Or drugged me in my soup or wine,  
Nor left me angry afterward:  
To die here with his hand in mine,  
His breath upon me, were not hard.  
(Our Lady hush these nightingales!)

## XV.

But set a springe for *him*, "mio ben;"  
My only good, my first, last love!  
Though Christ knows well what sin  
is, when  
He sees some things done, they must  
move  
Himself to wonder. Let her pass.  
I think of her by night and day.  
Must *I*, too, join her . . . out, alas! . . .  
With Giulio, in each word I say?  
And evermore the nightingales!

## XVI.

Giulio, my Giulio!—sing they so,  
And you be silent? Do I speak,

And you not hear? An arm you  
throw  
Round some one, and I feel so  
weak?  
— O owl-like birds! They sing for  
spite,  
They sing for hate, they sing for  
doom,  
They'll sing through death who sing  
through night,  
They'll sing, and stun me in the  
tomb—  
The nightingales, the nightingales!

## MY KATE.

## I.

SHE was not as pretty as women I  
know;  
And yet all your best, made of sun-  
shine and snow,  
Drop to shade, melt to nought, in the  
long trodden ways,  
While she's still remembered on warm  
and cold days—

My Kate.

## II.

Her air had a meaning, her move-  
ments a grace;  
You turned from the fairest to gaze  
on her face:  
And, when you had once seen her  
forehead and mouth,  
You saw as distinctly her soul and  
her truth—

My Kate.

## III.

Such a blue inner light from her eye-  
lids outbroke,  
You looked at her silence, and fancied  
she spoke:  
When she did, so peculiar yet soft  
was the tone,  
Though the loudest spoke also, you  
heard her alone—

My Kate.

## IV.

I doubt if she said to you much that  
could act  
As a thought or suggestion: she did  
not attract

In the sense of the brilliant or wise;  
I infer  
'Twas her thinking of others made  
you think of her —

My Kate.

v.

She never found fault with you, never  
implied  
Your wrong by her right; and yet  
men at her side  
Grew nobler, girls purer, as through  
the whole town  
The children were gladder that pulled  
at her gown —

My Kate.

vi.

None knelt at her feet confessed lovers  
in thrall:  
They knelt more to God than they  
used, — that was all.  
If you praised her as charming, some  
asked what you meant;  
But the charm of her presence was  
felt when she went —

My Kate.

vii.

The weak and the gentle, the ribald  
and rude,  
She took as she found them, and did  
them all good;  
It always was so with her — see what  
you have!  
She has made the grass greener even  
here . . . with her grave —

My Kate.

viii.

My dear one! when thou wast alive  
with the rest,  
I held thee the sweetest, and loved  
thee the best;  
And now thou art dead, shall I not  
take thy part,  
As thy smiles used to do for thyself,  
my sweet heart —

My Kate?

A SONG FOR THE RAGGED-  
SCHOOLS OF LONDON.

WRITTEN IN ROME.

i.

I AM listening here in Rome.  
"England's strong," say many  
speakers:

"If she winks, the Czar must come,  
Prow and topsail to the breakers."

ii.

"England's rich in coal and oak,"  
Adds a Roman, getting moody:  
"If she shakes a travelling-cloak,  
Down our Appian roll the scudi."

iii.

"England's righteous," they rejoin:  
"Who shall grudge her exaltations,  
When her wealth of golden coin  
Works the welfare of the nations?"

iv.

I am listening here in Rome.  
Over Alps a voice is sweeping, —  
"England's cruel, save us some  
Of these victims in her keeping!"

v.

As the cry beneath the wheel  
Of an old triumphal Roman  
Cleft the people's shouts like steel,  
While the show was spoilt for no  
man,

vi.

Comes that voice. Let others shout,  
Other poets praise my land here:  
I am sadly sitting out,  
Praying, "God forgive her gran-  
deur."

vii.

Shall we boast of empire, where  
Time with ruin sits commissioned?  
In God's liberal blue air  
Peter's dome itself looks wizened;

viii.

And the mountains, in disdain,  
Gather back their lights of opal  
From the dumb despondent plain,  
Heaped with jaw-bones of a people.

ix.

Lordly English think it o'er,  
Cæsar's doing is all undone!  
You have cannons on your shore,  
And free Parliaments in London,

x.

Princes' parks, and merchants'  
homes,  
Tents for soldiers, ships for sea-  
men, —

Ay, but ruins worse than Rome's  
In your pauper men and women.

## XI.

Women leering through the gas,  
(Just such bosoms used to nurse  
you,)

Men, turned wolves by famine,—  
pass!

Those can speak themselves, and  
curse you.

## XII.

But these others — children small,  
Spilt like blots about the city,  
Quay and street, and palace-wall —  
Take them up into your pity!

## XIII.

Ragged children with bare feet,  
Whom the angels in white raiment  
Know the names of, to repeat  
When they come on you for pay-  
ment.

## XIV.

Ragged children, hungry-eyed,  
Huddled up out of the coldness  
On your doorsteps, side by side,  
Till your footman damns their bold-  
ness.

## XV.

In the alleys, in the squares,  
Begging, lying little rebels;  
In the noisy thoroughfares,  
Struggling on with piteous trebles.

## XVI.

Patient children — think what pain  
Makes a young child patient —  
ponder!  
Wronged too commonly to strain  
After right, or wish, or wonder.

## XVII.

Wicked children, with peaked chins,  
And old foreheads! there are many  
With no pleasures except sins,  
Gambling with a stolen penny.

## XVIII.

Sickly children, that whine low  
To themselves, and not their  
mothers,  
From mere habit, — never so  
Hoping help or care from others.

## XIX.

Healthy children, with those blue  
English eyes, fresh from their  
Maker,  
Fierce and ravenous, staring through  
At the brown loaves of the baker.

## XX.

I am listening here in Rome,  
And the Romans are confessing,  
“English children pass in bloom  
All the prettiest made for blessing.

## XXI.

“*Angli angeli!*” (resumed  
From the mediæval story)  
“Such rose angelhoods, enplumed  
In such ringlets of pure glory!”

## XXII.

Can we smooth down the bright hair,  
O my sisters! calm, unthrilled in  
Our heart's pulses? Can we bear  
The sweet looks of our own children,

## XXIII.

While those others, lean and small,  
Scurf and mildew of the city,  
Spot our streets, convict us all  
Till we take them into pity?

## XXIV.

“Is it our fault?” you reply,  
“When, throughout civilization,  
Every nation's empery  
Is asserted by starvation?”

## XXV.

“All these mouths we cannot feed,  
And we cannot clothe these bodies.”  
Well, if man's so hard indeed,  
Let them learn, at least, what God  
is!

## XXVI.

Little outcasts from life's fold,  
The grave's hope they may be  
joined in,  
By Christ's covenant consoled  
For our social contract's grinding

## XXVII.

If no better can be done,  
Let us do but this, — endeavor  
That the sun behind the sun  
Shine upon them while they shiver!

## XXVIII.

On the dismal London flags,  
Through the cruel social juggle,  
Put a thought beneath their rags  
To ennoble the heart's struggle.

## XXIX.

O my sisters! not so much  
Are we asked for, — not a blossom  
From our children's nose-gay, such  
As we gave it from our bosom,

## XXX.

Not the milk left in their cup,  
Not the lamp while they are sleep-  
ing,  
Not the little cloak hung up  
While the coat's in daily keeping,

## XXXI.

But a place in RAGGED-SCHOOLS,  
Where the outcasts may to-morrow  
Learn by gentle words and rules  
Just the uses of their sorrow.

## XXXII.

O my sisters! children small,  
Blue-eyed, wailing through the city,  
Our own babes cry in them all:  
Let us take them into pity.

## MAY'S LOVE.

## I.

You love all, you say, —  
Round, beneath, above, me:  
Find me, then, some way  
Better than to love me,  
Me, too, dearest May!

## II.

O world-kissing eyes  
Which the blue heavens melt to;  
I, sad, otherwise,  
Loathe the sweet looks dealt to  
All things — men and flies.

## III.

You love all, you say:  
Therefore, dear, abate me  
Just your love, I pray!  
Shut your eyes and hate me —  
Only *me*, fair May!

## AMY'S CRUELTY.

## I.

FAIR Amy of the terraced house,  
Assist me to discover  
Why you, who would not hurt a  
mouse,  
Can torture so your lover.

## II.

You give your coffee to the cat,  
You stroke the dog for coming,  
And all your face grows kinder at  
The little brown bee's humming.

## III.

But when *he* haunts your door . . .  
the town  
Marks coming, and marks going . . .  
You seem to have stitched your eye-  
lids down  
To that long piece of sewing!

## IV.

You never give a look, not you,  
Nor drop him a "Good-morning,"  
To keep his long day warm and blue,  
So fretted by your scorning.

## V.

She shook her head — "The mouse  
and bee  
For crumb or flower will linger;  
The dog is happy at my knee;  
The cat purrs at my finger.

## VI.

"But *he* . . . to *him*, the least thing  
given  
Means great things at a distance:  
He wants my world, my sun, my  
heaven,  
Soul, body, whole existence.

## VII.

"They say love gives, as well as takes;  
But I'm a simple maiden, —  
My mother's first smile when she  
wakes  
I still have smiled and prayed in.

## VIII.

"I only know my mother's love,  
Which gives all, and asks nothing;  
And this new loving sets the groove  
Too much the way of loathing.

## IX.

" Unless he gives me all in change,  
I forfeit all things by him:  
The risk is terrible and strange —  
I tremble, doubt . . . deny him

## X.

" He's sweetest friend or hardest foe,  
Best angel or worst devil:  
I either hate or . . . love him so,  
I can't be merely civil!

## XI.

" You trust a woman who puts forth  
Her blossoms thick as summer's?  
You think she dreams what love is  
worth,  
Who casts it to new-comers?

## XII.

" Such love's a cowslip-ball to fling, —  
A moment's pretty pastime:  
I give . . . all me, if any thing,  
The first time and the last time.

## XIII.

" Dear neighbor of the trellised house,  
A man should murmur never,  
Though treated worse than dog and  
mouse,  
Till doted on forever!"

## MY HEART AND I.

## I.

ENOUGH! we're tired, my heart and I.  
We sit beside the headstone thus,  
And wish that name were carved  
for us.  
The moss reprints more tenderly  
The hard types of the mason's knife,  
As heaven's sweet life renews  
earth's life  
With which we're tired, my heart  
and I.

## II.

You see we're tired, my heart and I.  
We dealt with books, we trusted  
men,  
And in our own blood drenched the  
pen,  
As if such colors could not fly.

We walked too straight for for-  
tune's end,  
We loved too true to keep a friend:  
At last we're tired, my heart and I.

## III.

How tired we feel, my heart and I!  
We seem of no use in the world;  
Our fancies hang gray and uncurled  
About men's eyes indifferently;  
Our voice, which thrilled you so,  
will let  
You sleep; our tears are only wet:  
What do we here, my heart and I?

## IV.

So tired, so tired, my heart and I!  
It was not thus in that old time  
When Ralph sat with me 'neath the  
lime  
To watch the sunset from the sky.  
"Dear love, you're looking tired,"  
he said;  
I, smiling at him, shook my head:  
'Tis now we're tired, my heart and I.

## V.

So tired, so tired, my heart and I!  
Though now none takes me on his  
arm  
To fold me close, and kiss me warm  
Till each quick breath end in a sigh  
Of happy languor. Now, alone,  
We lean upon this graveyard stone,  
Uncheered, unloved, my heart and I.

## VI.

Tired out we are, my heart and I.  
Suppose the world brought diadems  
To tempt us, crusted with loose  
gems  
Of powers and pleasures? Let it try.  
We scarcely care to look at even  
A pretty child, or God's blue heaven,  
We feel so tired, my heart and I.

## VII.

Yet who complains? My heart and I?  
In this abundant earth no doubt  
Is little room for things worn out:  
Disdain them, break them, throw  
them by!  
And if, before the days grew rough,  
We *once* were loved, used, — well  
enough  
I think we've fared, my heart and I.

THE BEST THING IN THE  
WORLD.

WHAT'S the best thing in the world?  
June-rose, by May-dew impearled;  
Sweet south wind that means no rain;  
Truth, not cruel to a friend;  
Pleasure, not in haste to end;  
Beauty, not self-decked and curled  
Till its pride is over plain;  
Light, that never makes you wink;  
Memory, that gives no pain;  
Love, when, so, you're loved again.  
What's the best thing in the world?  
— Something out of it, I think.

WHERE'S AGNES?

I.

NAY, if I had come back so,  
And found her dead in her grave,  
And if a friend I know  
Had said, "Be strong, nor rave;  
She lies there, dead below:

II.

"I saw her, I who speak,  
White, stiff, the face one blank:  
The blue shade came to her cheek  
Before they nailed the plank,  
For she had been dead a week," —

III.

Why, if he had spoken so,  
I might have believed the thing.  
Although her look, although  
Her step, laugh, voice's ring,  
Lived in me still as they do.

IV.

But dead that other way,  
Corrupted thus and lost?  
That sort of worm in the clay?  
I cannot count the cost,  
That I should rise and pay

V.

My Agnes false? such shame?  
She? Rather be it said  
That the pure saint of her name  
Has stood there in her stead,  
And tricked you to this blame.

VI

Her very gown, her cloak,  
Fell chastely: no disguise,  
But expression! while she broke  
With her clear gray morning-eyes  
Full upon me, and then spoke.

VII.

She wore her hair away  
From her forehead, like a cloud  
Which a little wind in May  
Peels off finely; disallowed,  
Though bright enough to stay.

VIII.

For the heavens must have the place  
To themselves, to use and shine in,  
As her soul would have her face  
To press through upon mine, in  
That orb of angel grace.

IX.

Had she any fault at all,  
'Twas having none, I thought too—  
There seemed a sort of thrall;  
As she felt her shadow ought to  
Fall straight upon the wall.

X.

Her sweetness strained the sense  
Of common life and duty;  
And every day's expense  
Of moving in such beauty  
Required, almost, defence.

XI.

What good, I thought, is done  
By such sweet things, if any?  
This world smells ill i' the sun  
Though the garden-flowers are  
many, —  
*She* is only one.

XII.

Can a voice so low and soft  
Take open actual part  
With Right, — maintain aloft  
Pure truth in life or art,  
Vexed always, wounded oft? —

XIII.

*She* fit, with that fair pose  
Which melts from curve to curve,  
To stand, run, work with those  
Who wrestle and deserve,  
And speak plain without gloze?

## XIV.

But I turned round on my fear  
 Defiant, disagreeing —  
 What if God has set her here  
 Less for action than for being? —  
 For the eye and for the ear.

## XV.

Just to show what beauty may,  
 Just to prove what music can, —  
 And then to die away  
 From the presence of a man  
 Who shall learn henceforth to pray?

## XVI.

As a door left half ajar  
 In heaven would make him think  
 How heavenly-different are  
 Things glanced at through the  
 chink,  
 Till he pined from near to far.

## XVII.

That door could lead to hell?  
 That shining merely meant  
 Damnation? What! She fell  
 Like a woman, who was sent  
 Like an angel, by a spell?

## XVIII.

She, who scarcely trod the earth,  
 Turned mere dirt? My Agnes, —  
 mine!  
 Called so! felt of too much worth  
 To be used so! too divine  
 To be breathed near, and so forth!

## XIX.

Why, I dared not name a sin  
 In her presence: I went round,  
 Clipped its name, and shut it in  
 Some mysterious crystal sound, —  
 Changed the dagger for the pin.

## XX.

Now you name herself *that word*?  
 O my Agnes! O my saint!  
 Then the great joys of the Lord  
 Do not last? Then all this paint  
 Runs off nature? leaves a board?

## XXI.

Who's dead here? No, not she:  
 Rather I! or whence this damp  
 Cold corruption's misery?  
 While my very mourners stamp  
 Closer in the clods on me.

## XXII.

And my mouth is full of dust  
 Till I cannot speak and curse —  
 Speak and damn him . . . "Blame's  
 unjust"?  
 Sin blots out the universe,  
 All because she would and must?

## XXIII.

She, my white rose, dropping off  
 The high rose-tree branch! and not  
 That the night-wind blew too rough,  
 Or the noon-sun burnt too hot,  
 But, that being a rose — 'twas enough!

## XXIV.

Then henceforth may earth grow  
 trees!  
 No more roses! — hard straight  
 lines  
 To score lies out! none of these  
 Fluctuant curves, but firs and  
 pines,  
 Poplars, cedars, cypresses!

## DE PROFUNDIS.

## I.

THE face, which, duly as the sun,  
 Rose up for me with life begun,  
 To mark all bright hours of the day  
 With hourly love, is dimmed away, —  
 And yet my days go on, go on.

## II.

The tongue, which, like a stream,  
 could run  
 Smooth music from the roughest  
 stone,  
 And every morning with "Good-  
 day"  
 Make each day good, is hushed  
 away, —  
 And yet my days go on, go on.

## III.

The heart, which, like a staff, was one  
 For mine to lean and rest upon,  
 The strongest on the longest day  
 With steadfast love, is caught  
 away, —  
 And yet my days go on, go on.



## IV.

And cold before my summer's done,  
And deaf in Nature's general tune,  
And fallen too low for special fear,  
And here, with hope no longer here, —  
While the tears drop, my days go on.

## V.

The world goes whispering to its own,  
"This anguish pierces to the bone;"  
And tender friends go sighing round,  
"What love can ever cure this  
wound?"  
My days go on, my days go on.

## VI.

The past rolls forward on the sun,  
And makes all night. O dreams be-  
gun,  
Not to be ended! Ended bliss,  
And life that will not end in this! —  
My days go on, my days go on.

## VII.

Breath freezes on my lips to moan:  
As one alone, once not alone,  
I sit and knock at Nature's door,  
Heart-bare, heart-hungry, very poor,  
Whose desolated days go on.

## VIII.

I knock and cry, Undone, undone!  
Is there no help, no comfort, — none?  
No gleaning in the wide wheat-plains  
Where others drive their loaded  
wains? —  
My vacant days go on, go on.

## IX.

This Nature, though the snows be  
down,  
Thinks kindly of the bird of June:  
The little red hip on the tree  
Is ripe for such. What is for me  
Whose days so winterly go on?

## X.

No bird am I to sing in June,  
And dare not ask an equal boon.  
Good nests and berries red are Na-  
ture's  
To give away to better creatures, —  
And yet my days go on, go on.

## XI.

I ask less kindness to be done, —  
Only to loose these pilgrim-shoon,  
(Too early worn and grimed) with  
sweet  
Cool deathly touch to these tired feet,  
Till days go out which now go on.

## XII.

Only to lift the turf unmown  
From off the earth where it has  
grown,  
Some cubit-space, and say, "Behold!  
Creep in, poor heart, beneath that  
fold,  
Forgetting how the days go on."

## XIII.

What harm would that do? Green  
anon  
The sward would quicken, overshadowed  
By skies as blue; and crickets might  
Have leave to chirp there day and  
night  
While my new rest went on, went on.

## XIV.

From gracious Nature have I won  
Such liberal bounty? may I run  
So, lizard-like, within her side,  
And there be safe, who now am tried  
By days that painfully go on?

## XV.

— A Voice reproves me thereupon,  
More sweet than Nature's when the  
drone  
Of bees is sweetest, and more deep  
Than when the rivers overleap  
The shuddering pines, and thunder  
on.

## XVI.

God's voice, not Nature's! Night  
and noon  
He sits upon the great white throne,  
And listens for the creatures' praise.  
What babble we of days and days?  
The Dayspring He, whose days go on.

## XVII.

He reigns above, he reigns alone;  
Systems burn out, and leave his  
throne;  
Fair mists of seraphs melt and fall  
Around him, changeless amid all, —  
Ancient of days, whose days go on.

## XVIII.

He reigns below, he reigns alone,  
And, having life in love foregone  
Beneath the crown of sovran thorns  
He reigns the jealous God. Who  
mourns  
Or rules with him, while days go on ?

## XIX.

By anguish which made pale the sun,  
I hear him charge his saints that none  
Among his creatures anywhere  
Blaspheme against him with despair,  
However darkly days go on.

## XX.

Take from my head the thorn-wreath  
brown !  
No mortal grief deserves that crown.  
O supreme love, chief misery,  
The sharp regalia are for THEE  
Whose days eternally go on !

## XXI.

For us, whatever's undergone,  
Thou knowest, willest, what is done.  
Grief may be joy misunderstood:  
Only the Good discerns the good.  
I trust Thee while my days go on.

## XXII.

Whatever's lost, it first was won;  
We will not struggle nor impugn.  
Perhaps the cup was broken here,  
That heaven's new wine might show  
more clear.  
I praise Thee while my days go on.

## XXIII.

I praise Thee while my days go on;  
I love Thee while my days go on;  
Through dark and dearth, through  
fire and frost,  
With emptied arms and treasure lost,  
I thank Thee while my days go on.

## XXIV.

And having in thy life-depth thrown  
Being and suffering (which are one),  
As a child drops his pebble small  
Down some deep well, and hears it  
fall  
Smiling, — so I. THY DAYS GO ON.

## A MUSICAL INSTRUMENT.

WHAT was he doing, the great god  
Pan,  
Down in the reeds by the river ?  
Spreading ruin, and scattering ban,  
Splashing and paddling with hoofs of  
a goat,  
And breaking the golden lilies afloat  
With the dragon-fly on the river.

## II.

He tore out a reed, the great god Pan,  
From the deep, cool bed of the  
river.  
The limpid water turbidly ran,  
And the broken lilies a-dying lay,  
And the dragon-fly had fled away,  
Ere he brought it out of the river.

## III.

High on the shore sat the great god  
Pan,  
While turbidly flowed the river,  
And hacked and hewed as a great god  
can,  
With his hard bleak steel at the pa-  
tient reed,  
Till there was not a sign of the leaf  
indeed  
To prove it fresh from the river.

## IV.

He cut it short, did the great god  
Pan,  
(How tall it stood in the river !)  
Then drew the pith, like the heart of  
a man,  
Steadily from the outside ring,  
And notched the poor, dry, empty  
thing  
In holes as he sat by the river.

## V.

"This is the way," laughed the great  
god Pan,  
(Laughed while he sat by the river,)  
"The only way, since gods began  
To make sweet music, they could suc-  
ceed."  
Then, dropping his mouth to a hole in  
the reed,  
He blew in power by the river.

## VI.

Sweet, sweet, sweet, O Pan,  
 Piercing sweet by the river!  
 Blinding sweet, O great god Pan  
 The sun on the hill forgot to die,  
 And the lilies revived, and the dragon-  
 fly  
 Came back to dream on the river.

## VII.

Yet half a beast is the great god Pan,  
 To laugh as he sits by the river,  
 Making a poet out of a man:  
 The true gods sigh for the cost and  
 pain,—  
 For the reed which grows nevermore  
 again  
 As a reed with the reeds in the  
 river.

FIRST NEWS FROM VILLA-  
FRANCA.

## I.

PEACE, peace, peace, do you say?  
 What!—with the enemy's guns in  
 our ears?  
 With the country's wrong not ren-  
 dered back?  
 What!—while Austria stands at bay  
 In Mantua, and our Venice bears  
 The cursed flag of the yellow and  
 black?

## II.

Peace, peace, peace, do you say?  
 And this the Mincio? Where's the  
 fleet,  
 And where's the sea? Are we all  
 blind  
 Or mad with the blood shed yester-  
 day,  
 Ignoring Italy under our feet,  
 And seeing things before, behind?

## III.

Peace, peace, peace, do you say?  
 What!—uncontested, undenied?  
 Because we triumph, we succumb?  
 A pair of emperors stand in the way,  
 (One of whom is a man, beside)  
 To sign and seal our cannons dumb?

## IV.

No, not Napoleon!—he who mused  
 At Paris, and at Milan spake,  
 And at Solferino led the fight:  
 Not he we trusted, honored, used  
 Our hopes and hearts for . . . till  
 they break—  
 Even so, you tell us . . . in his  
 sight.

## V.

Peace, peace, is still your word?  
 We say you lie then!—that is  
 plain.  
 There *is* no peace, and shall be  
 none.  
 Our very dead would cry, "Absurd!"  
 And clamor that they died in vain,  
 And whine to come back to the sun.

## VI.

Hush! more reverence for the dead!  
 They've done the most for Italy  
 Evermore since the earth was fair.  
 Now would that *we* had died instead.  
 Still dreaming peace meant liberty,  
 And did not, could not, mean de-  
 spair.

## VII.

Peace, you say?—yes, peace, in  
 truth!  
 But such a peace as the ear can  
 achieve  
 'Twixt the rifle's click and the rush  
 of the ball,  
 'Twixt the tiger's spring and the  
 crunch of the tooth,  
 'Twixt the dying atheist's negative  
 And God's face—waiting, after all!

KING VICTOR EMANUEL EN-  
TERING FLORENCE, APRIL,  
1860.

## I.

X KING of us all, we cried to thee, cried  
 to thee,  
 Trampled to earth by the beasts im-  
 pure,  
 Dragged by the chariots which  
 shame as they roll:

The dust of our torment far and wide  
to thee  
Went up, darkening thy royal soul.  
Be witness, Cavour,  
That the king was sad for the people  
in thrall,  
This king of us all!

## II.

King, we cried to thee! Strong in  
replying,  
Thy word and thy sword sprang  
rapid and sure,  
Cleaving our way to a nation's  
place.  
Oh first soldier of Italy! — crying  
Now grateful, exultant, we look in  
thy face.  
Be witness, Cavour,  
That, freedom's first soldier, the freed  
should call  
First king of them all!

## III.

This is our beautiful Italy's birth-  
day:  
High-thoughted souls, whether  
many or fewer,  
Bring her the gift, and wish her the  
good,  
While Heaven presents on this sunny  
earth-day  
The noble king to the land re-  
newed.  
Be witness, Cavour!  
Roar, cannon-mouths! Proclaim, in-  
stall  
The king of us all!

## IV.

Grave he rides through the Florence  
gateway,  
Clenching his face into calm, to im-  
mure  
His struggling heart till it half dis-  
appears:  
If he relaxed for a moment, straight-  
way  
He would break out into passionate  
tears —  
(Be witness, Cavour!)  
While rings the cry without interval,  
“Live, king of us all!”

## V.

Cry, free peoples! Honor the nation  
By crowning the true man: and  
none is truer:

Pisa is here, and Livorno is here,  
And thousands of faces, in wild exul-  
tation,  
Burn over the windows to feel him  
near, —  
(Be witness, Cavour!)  
Burn over from terrace, roof, window,  
and wall,  
On this king of us all.

## VI.

Grave! A good man's ever the  
graver  
For bearing a nation's trust secure;  
And *he*, he thinks of the heart, be-  
side,  
Which broke for Italy, failing to save  
her,  
And pining away by Oporto's tide;  
Be witness, Cavour,  
That he thinks of his vow on that  
royal pall —  
This king of us all.

## VII.

Flowers, flowers, from the flowery  
city!  
Such innocent thanks for a deed so  
pure,  
As, melting away for joy into flow-  
ers,  
The nation invites him to enter his  
Pitti,  
And evermore reign in this Florence  
of ours.  
Be witness, Cavour!  
He'll stand where the reptiles were  
used to crawl —  
This king of us all.

## VIII.

Grave, as the manner of noble men  
is —  
Deeds unfinished will weigh on the  
doer;  
And, baring his head to those crape-  
veiled flags,  
He bows to the grief of the South and  
Venice.  
Oh, riddle the last of the yellow to  
rags,  
And swear by Cavour  
That the king shall reign where the  
tyrants fall,  
True king of us all!

THE SWORD OF CASTRUC-  
CIO CASTRACANI.

"*Questa è per me.*"  
KING VICTOR EMANUEL.

## I.

WHEN Victor Emanuel, the king,  
Went down to his Lucca that day,  
The people, each vaunting the thing  
As he gave it, gave all things  
away, —  
In a burst of fierce gratitude, say,  
As they tore out their hearts for the  
king.

## II.

— Gave the green forest-walk on the  
wall,  
With the Apennine blue through  
the trees;  
Gave the palaces, churches, and all  
The great pictures which burn out  
of these:  
But the eyes of the king seemed to  
freeze  
As he gazed upon ceiling and wall.

## III.

"Good!" said the king as he passed.  
Was he cold to the arts? — or else  
coy  
To possession? or crossed, at the last,  
(Whispered some) by the vote in  
Savoy?  
Shout! Love him enough for his  
joy!  
"Good!" said the king as he passed.

## IV.

He travelling the whole day through  
flowers,  
And protesting amenities, found  
At Pistoia, betwixt the two showers  
Of red roses, the "Orphans" (re-  
nowned  
As the heirs of Puccini), who wound  
With a sword through the crowd and  
the flowers.

## V.

"'Tis the sword of Castruccio, O  
king, —  
In that strife of intestinal hate,  
Very famous! Accept what we  
bring,

We who cannot be sons, by our fate,  
Rendered citizens by thee of late,  
And endowed with a country and  
king.

## VI.

"Read! Puccini has willed that this  
sword  
(Which once made in an ignorant  
feud  
Many orphans) remain in our ward  
Till some patriot its pure civic blood  
Wipe away in the foe's, and make  
good,  
In delivering the land by the sword."

## VII.

Then the king exclaimed, "This is for  
*me!*"  
And he dashed out his hand on the  
hilt,  
While his blue eye shot fire openly,  
And his heart overboiled till it spilt  
A hot prayer: "God! the rest as  
thou wilt,  
But grant me this! — *This is for me.*"

## VIII.

O Victor Emanuel, the king,  
The sword is for *thee*, and the deed,  
And nought for the alien, next spring,  
Nought for Hapsburg and Bourbon  
agreed —  
But, for us, a great Italy freed,  
With a hero to head us, — our king!

## SUMMING UP IN ITALY.

INSCRIBED TO INTELLIGENT PUB-  
LICS OUT OF IT.

## I.

OBSERVE how it will be at last,  
When our Italy stands at full statu-  
re,  
A year ago tied down so fast  
That the cord cut the quick of her  
nature!  
You'll honor the deed and its scope,  
Then in logical sequence upon it,  
Will use up the remnants of rope  
By hanging the men who have done  
it.

## II.

The speech in the Commons, which  
hits you  
A sketch off, how dungeons must  
feel;  
The official despatch, which commits  
you  
From stamping out groans with  
your heel;  
Suggestions in journal or book for  
Good efforts are praised as is  
meet, —  
But what in this world can men look  
for,  
Who only achieve and complete ?

## III.

True, you've praise for the fireman  
who sets his  
Brave face to the axe of the flame,  
Disappears in the smoke, and then  
fetches  
A babe down, or idiot that's lame, —  
For the boor even, who rescues  
through pity  
A sheep from the brute who would  
kick it:  
But saviors of nations ! — 'tis pretty,  
And doubtful: they *may* be so  
wicked:

## IV.

Azeglio, Farini, Mamiani,  
Ricasoli, — doubt by the dozen. —  
here's  
Pepoli too, and Cipriani, —  
Imperial cousins and cozener: —  
Arese, Laiatico, — courtly  
Of manners, if stringent of mouth:  
Garibaldi! we'll come to him shortly  
(As soon as he *ends* in the South.)

## V.

Napoleon — as strong as ten armies,  
Corrupt as seven devils — a fact  
You accede to, then seek where the  
harm is  
Drained off from the man to his act,  
And find — a free nation! Suppose  
Some hell-brood in Eder's sweet  
greenery,  
Convoked for creating — a rose!  
Would it suit the infernal ma-  
chinery?

## VI.

Cavour — to the despot's desire,  
Who his own thought so craftily  
marries —  
What is he but just a thin wire  
For conducting the lightning from  
Paris?  
Yes, write down the two as compeers,  
Confessing (you would not permit a  
lie)  
He bore up his Piedmont ten years  
Till she suddenly smiled, and was  
Italy.

## VII.

And the king, with that "stain on  
his scutcheon,"<sup>1</sup>  
Savoy — as the calumny runs;  
(If it be not his blood, — with his  
clutch on  
The sword, and his face to the guns).  
O first, where the battle-storm gath-  
ers,  
O loyal of heart on the throne,  
Let those keep the "graves of their  
fathers"  
Who quail in a nerve from their  
own!

## VIII.

For *thee* — through the dim Hades-  
portal  
The dream of a voice — "Blessed  
thou  
Who hast made all thy race twice im-  
mortal!  
No need of the sepulchres now!  
— Left to Bourbons and Hapsburgs,  
who fester  
Above-ground with worm-eaten  
souls,  
While the ghost of some pale feudal  
jester  
Before them strews treaties in  
holes."

## IX.

But hush! — am I dreaming a poem  
Of Hades, Heaven, Justice? Not I;  
I began too far off, in my proem,  
With what men believe and deny;  
And on earth, whatsoever the need is,  
(To sum up as thoughtful reviewers)  
The moral of every great deed is —  
The virtue of slandering the doers.

<sup>1</sup> Blue Book. Diplomatical Correspondence.

## "DIED . . . "

## THE "TIMES" OBITUARY.

## I.

WHAT shall we add now? He is dead.

And I who praise, and you who blame,

With wash of words across his name,  
Find suddenly declared instead —  
"On Sunday, third of August, dead."

## II.

Which stops the whole we talked to-day,

I, quickened to a plansive glance  
At his large general tolerance  
By common people's narrow way,  
Stopped short in praising. Dead,  
they say.

## III.

And you, who had just put in a sort  
Of cold deduction — "rather, large  
Through weakness of the continent  
marge,  
Than greatness of the thing con-  
tained" —  
Broke off. Dead! — there, you stood  
restrained.

## IV.

As if we had talked in following one  
Upsome long gallery. "Would you  
choose  
An air like that? The gait is loose,  
Or noble." Sudden in the sun  
An oubliette winks. Where is he?  
Gone.

## V.

Dead. Man's "I was," by God's "I  
am" —  
All hero-worship comes to that.  
High heart, high thought, high fame,  
as flat  
As a gravestone. Bring your *Jacet  
jam* —  
The epitaph's an epigram.

## VI.

Dead. There's an answer to arrest  
All carping. Dust's his natural  
place?  
He'll let the flies buzz round his  
face,  
And, though you slander, not protest?  
— From such an one exact the best?

## VII.

Opinions gold or brass are null.  
We chuck our flattery or abuse,  
Called Cæsar's due, as Charon's  
dues,  
I' the teeth of some dead sage or fool,  
To mend the grinning of a skull.

## VIII.

Be abstinent in praise and blame.  
The man's still mortal, who stands  
first,  
And mortal only, if last and worst.  
Then slowly lift so frail a fame,  
Or softly drop so poor a shame.

## THE FORCED RECRUIT.

SOLFERINO, 1859.

## I.

IN the ranks of the Austrian you found  
him,  
He died with his face to you all;  
Yet bury him here where around him  
You honor your bravest that fall.

## II.

Venetian, fair-featured and slender,  
He lies shot to death in his youth,  
With a smile on his lips over-tender  
For any mere soldier's dead mouth.

## III.

No stranger, and yet not a traitor,  
Though alien the cloth on his breast,  
Underneath it how seldom a greater  
Young heart has a shot sent to rest!

## IV.

By your enemy tortured and goaded  
To march with them, stand in their  
file,  
His musket (see) never was loaded,  
He facing your guns with that  
smile!

## V.

As orphans yearn on to their mothers,  
He yearned to your patriot bands; —  
"Let me die for our Italy, brothers,  
If not in your ranks, by your hands!"

## VI.

" Aim straightly, fire steadily ! spare  
me  
A ball in the body which may  
Deliver my heart here, and tear me  
This badge of the Austrian away ! "

## VII.

So thought he, so died he this morn-  
ing.  
What then ? many others have died.  
Ay, but easy for men to die scorning  
The death-stroke, who fought side  
by side —

## VIII.

One tricolor floating above them ;  
Struck down 'mid triumphant ac-  
claims  
Of an Italy rescued to love them  
And blazon the brass with their  
names.

## IX.

But he, without witness or honor,  
Mixed, shamed in his country's re-  
gard,  
With the tyrants who march in upon  
her,  
Died faithful and passive: 'twas  
hard.

## X.

'Twas sublime. In a cruel restric-  
tion  
Cut off from the guerdon of sons,  
With most filial obedience, convic-  
tion,  
His soul kissed the lips of her guns.

## XI.

That moves you ? Nay, grudge not  
to show it,  
While digging a grave for him here:  
The others who died, says your poet,  
Have glory, — let *him* have a tear.

## GARIBALDI.

## I.

HE bent his head upon his breast  
Wherein his lion-heart lay sick: —  
" Perhaps we are not ill repaid ;  
Perhaps this is not a true test ;

Perhaps this was not a foul trick ;  
Perhaps none wronged, and none  
betrayed.

## II.

" Perhaps the people's vote which  
here  
United, there may disunite,  
And both be lawful as they think ;  
Perhaps a patriot statesman, dear  
For chartering nations, can with  
right  
Disfranchise those who hold the  
ink.

## III.

" Perhaps men's wisdom is not craft ;  
Men's greatness, not a selfish greed ;  
Men's justice, not the safer side ;  
Perhaps even women, when they  
laughed,  
Wept, thanked us that the land was  
freed,  
Not wholly (though they kissed us)  
lied.

## IV.

" Perhaps no more than this we  
meant,  
When up at Austria's guns we flew,  
And quenched them with a cry  
apiece,  
*Italia!* — Yet a dream was sent . . .  
The little house my father knew,  
The olives and the palms of Nice."

## V.

He paused, and drew his sword out  
slow,  
Then pored upon the blade intent,  
As if to read some written thing ;  
While many murmured, " He will go  
In that despairing sentiment  
And break his sword before the  
king."

## VI.

He poring still upon the blade,  
His large lid quivered, something  
fell.  
" Perhaps," he said, " I was not  
born  
With such fine brains to treat and  
trade, —  
And, if a woman knew it well,  
Her falsehood only meant her scorn.



## VII.

Yet through Varese's cannon-smoke,  
My eye saw clear: men feared this  
man  
At Como, where this sword could  
seal  
Death's protocol with every stroke:  
And now . . . the drop there scarcely  
can  
Impair the keenness of the steel.

## VIII.

"So man and sword may have their  
use;  
And if the soil beneath my foot  
In valor's act is forfeited,  
I'll strike the harder, take my dues  
Out nobler, and all loss confute  
From ampler heavens above my  
head.

## IX.

"My king, King Victor, I am thine!  
So much Nice-dust as what I am  
(To make our Italy) must cleave.  
Forgive that." Forward with a sign  
He went.  
You've seen the telegram?  
*Palermo's taken, we believe.*

## ONLY A CURL.

## I.

FRIENDS of faces unknown and a land  
Unvisited over the sea,  
Who tell me how lonely you stand  
With a single gold curl in the hand  
Held up to be looked at by me, —

## II.

While you ask me to ponder and say  
What a father and mother can do,  
With the bright fellow-locks put away  
Out of reach, beyond kiss, in the clay  
Where the violets press nearer than  
you:

## III.

Shall I speak like a poet, or run  
Into weak woman's tears for relief?  
O children! — I never lost one, —  
Yet my arm's round my own little  
son,  
And love knows the secret of grief.

## IV.

And I feel what it must be and is,  
When God draws a new angel so  
Through the house of a man up to  
his,  
With a murmur of music you miss,  
And a rapture of light you forego.

## V.

How you think, staring on at the  
door,  
Where the face of your angel flashed  
in,  
That its brightness, familiar before,  
Burns off from you ever the more  
For the dark of your sorrow and  
sin.

## VI.

"God lent him and takes him," you  
sigh;  
— Nay, there let me break with  
your pain:  
God's generous in giving, say I;  
And the thing which he gives, I deny  
That he ever can take back again.

## VII.

He gives what he gives. I appeal  
To all who bear babes, — in the hour  
When the veil of the body we feel  
Rent round us, — while torments re-  
veal  
The motherhood's advent in power,

## VIII.

And the babe cries! — has each of us  
known  
By apocalypse (God being there  
Full in nature) the child is our own,  
Life of life, love of love, moan of  
moan,  
Through all changes, all times,  
everywhere.

## IX.

He's ours and forever. Believe,  
O father! — O mother, look back  
To the first love's assurance! To  
give  
Means with God not to tempt or de-  
ceive  
With a cup thrust in Benjamin's  
sack.

## X.

He gives what he gives. Be content !  
 He resumes nothing given, be sure !  
 God lend ? Where the usurers lent  
 In his temple, indignant he went  
 And scourged away all those in-  
 pure.

## XI.

He lends not, but gives to the end,  
 As he loves to the end. If it seem  
 That he draws back a gift, compre-  
 hend  
 'Tis to add to it rather, — amend,  
 And finish it up to your dream, —

## XII.

Or keep, as a mother will toys  
 Too costly, though given by herself,  
 Till the room shall be stiller from  
 noise,  
 And the children more fit for such  
 joys  
 Kept over their heads on the shelf.

## XIII.

So look up, friends ! you, who indeed  
 Have possessed in your house a  
 sweet piece  
 Of the heaven which men strive for,  
 must need  
 Be more earnest than others are, —  
 speed  
 Where they loiter, persist where  
 they cease.

## XIV.

You know how one angel smiles  
 there.  
 Then weep not. 'Tis easy for you  
 To be drawn by a single gold hair  
 Of that curl, from earth's storm and  
 despair,  
 To the safe place above us. Adieu.

A VIEW ACROSS THE  
 ROMAN CAMPAGNA.

1861.

## I.

OVER the dumb Campagna-sea,  
 Out in the offing through mist and  
 rain,  
 St. Peter's Church heaves silently

Like a mighty ship in pain,  
 Facing the tempest with struggle  
 and strain.

## II.

Motionless waifs of ruined towers,  
 Soundless breakers of desolate land:  
 The sullen surf of the mist devours  
 That mountain-range upon either  
 hand,  
 Eaten away from its outline grand.

## III.

And over the dumb Campagna-sea  
 Where the ship of the Church  
 heaves on to wreck,  
 Alone and silent as God must be,  
 The Christ walks. Ay, but Peter's  
 neck  
 Is stiff to turn on the foundering  
 deck.

## IV.

Peter, Peter ! if such be thy name,  
 Now leave the ship for another to  
 steer,  
 And, proving thy faith evermore the  
 same,  
 Come forth, tread out through the  
 dark and drear,  
 Since He who walks on the sea is  
 here.

## V.

Peter, Peter ! He does not speak ;  
 He is not as rash as in old Galilee:  
 Safer a ship, though it toss and leak,  
 Than a reeling foot on a rolling sea !  
 And he's got to be round in the  
 girth, thinks he.

## VI.

Peter, Peter ! He does not stir ;  
 His nets are heavy with silver fish ;  
 He reckons his gains, and is keen to  
 infer  
 — "The broil on the shore, if the  
 Lord should wish:  
 But the sturgeon goes to the Cæsar's  
 dish."

## VII.

Peter, Peter ! thou fisher of men,  
 Fisher of fish wouldst thou live in-  
 stead ?  
 Hagglng for pence with the other  
 ten,  
 Cheating the market at so much a  
 head,  
 Gripping the bag of the traitor dead ?

## VIII.

At the triple crow of the Gallic cock  
 Thou weep'st not, thou, though  
 thine eyes be dazed:  
 What bird comes next in the tempest-  
 shock?  
 — Vultures! see, — as when Romu-  
 lus gazed, —  
 To inaugurate Rome for a world  
 amazed!

## THE KING'S GIFT.

## I.

TERESA, ah, Teresita!  
 Now what has the messenger brought  
 her,  
 Our Garibaldi's young daughter,  
 To make her stop short in her sing-  
 ing?  
 Will she not once more repeat a  
 Verse from that hymn of our hero's,  
 Setting the souls of us ringing?  
 Break off the song where the tear  
 rose?  
 Ah, Teresita!

## II.

A young thing, mark, is Teresa:  
 Her eyes have caught fire, to be sure,  
 in  
 That necklace of jewels from Turin,  
 Till blind their regard to us men is.  
 But still she remembers to raise a  
 Sly look to her father, and note —  
 "Could she sing on as well about  
 Venice,  
 Yet wear such a flame at her throat?  
 Decide for Teresa."

## III.

Teresa, ah, Teresita!  
 His right hand has paused on her  
 head;  
 "Accept it, my daughter," he said;  
 "Ay, wear it, true child of thy  
 mother!  
 Then sing, till all start to their feet, a  
 New verse ever bolder and freer!  
 King Victor's no king like another,  
 But verily noble as *we* are,  
 Child, Teresita!"

## PARTING LOVERS.

SIENA, 1860.

## I.

I LOVE thee, love thee, Giulio;  
 Some call me cold, and some de-  
 mure;  
 And if thou hast ever guessed that so  
 I loved thee . . . well, the proof  
 was poor,  
 And no one could be sure.

## II.

Before thy song (with shifted rhymes  
 To suit my name) did I undo  
 The persian? If it stirred sometimes,  
 Thou hast not seen a hand push  
 through  
 A foolish flower or two.

## III.

My mother, listening to my sleep,  
 Heard nothing but a sigh at night, —  
 The short sigh rippling on the deep,  
 When hearts run out of breath and  
 sight  
 Of men, to God's clear light.

## IV.

When others named thee, — thought  
 thy brows  
 Were straight, thy smile was ten-  
 der — "Here  
 He comes between the vineyard  
 rows!"  
 I said not "Ay," nor waited, dear,  
 To feel thee step too near.

## V.

I left such things to bolder girls, —  
 Olivia or Clotilda. Nay,  
 When that Clotilda, through her curls,  
 Held both thine eyes in hers one  
 day,  
 I marvelled, let me say.

## VI.

I could not try the woman's trick:  
 Between us straightway fell the  
 blush  
 Which kept me separate, blind, and  
 sick.  
 A wind came with thee in a flush,  
 As blown thro' Sinai's bush.

## VII.

But now that Italy invokes  
Her young men to go forth, and  
chase  
The foe or perish, — nothing chokes  
My voice, or drives me from the  
place.  
I look thee in the face.

## VIII.

I love thee! It is understood,  
Confest; I do not shrink or start.  
No blushes! all my body's blood  
Has gone to greaten this poor heart.  
That, loving, we may part.

## IX.

Our Italy invokes the youth  
To die if need be. Still there's  
room,  
Though earth is strained with dead in  
truth;  
Since twice the lilies were in bloom  
They have not grudged a tomb.

## X.

And many a plighted maid and wife  
And mother, who can say, since  
then,  
"My country," — cannot say through  
life  
"My son," "my spouse," "my  
flower of men,"  
And not weep dumb again.

## XI.

Heroic males the country bears;  
But daughters give up more than  
sons:  
Flags wave, drums beat, and un-  
awares  
You flash your souls out with the  
guns,  
And take your heaven at once.

## XII.

But we! we empty heart and home  
Of life's life, love! We bear to  
think  
You're gone, to feel you may not  
come,  
To hear the door-latch stir and  
clink,  
Yet no more you! . . . nor  
sink.

## XIII.

Dear God! when Italy is one,  
Complete, content from bound to  
bound,  
Suppose, for my share, earth's un-  
done  
By one grave in't! — as one small  
wound  
Will kill a man, 'tis found.

## XIV.

What then? If love's delight must  
end,  
At least we'll clear its truth from  
flaws.  
I love thee, love thee, sweetest  
friend!  
Now take my sweetest without  
pause,  
And help the nation's cause.

## XVI.

And thus, of noble Italy  
We'll both be worthy! Let her  
show  
The future how we made her free,  
Not sparing life . . . nor Giulio,  
Nor this — this heartbreak!  
Go.

## MOTHER AND POET.

TURIN, AFTER NEWS FROM GAETA,  
1861.

## I.

DEAD! One of them shot by the sea  
in the east,  
And one of them shot in the west  
by the sea.  
Dead! both my boys! When you sit  
at the feast,  
And are wanting a great song for  
Italy free,  
Let none look at *me*.

## II.

Yet I was a poetess only last year,  
And good at my art, for a woman,  
men said;  
But *this* woman, *this*, who is agonized  
here,  
— The east sea and west sea rhyme  
on in her head  
Forever instead.

## III.

What art can a woman be good at?  
 Oh, vain!  
 What art *is* she good at, but hurt-  
 ing her breast  
 With the milk-teeth of babes, and a  
 smile at the pain?  
 Ah, boys, how you hurt! you were  
 strong as you prest,  
 And I proud by that test.

## IV.

What art's for a woman? To hold  
 on her knees,  
 Both darlings! to feel all their  
 arms round her throat,  
 Cling, strangle a little! to sew by  
 degrees,  
 And 'broider the long-clothes and  
 neat little coat;  
 To dream and to dote.

## V.

To teach them. . . . It stings there!  
*I* made them indeed  
 Speak plain the word *country*. *I*  
 taught them, no doubt,  
 That a country's a thing men should  
 die for at need.  
*I* prated of liberty, rights, and  
 about  
 The tyrant east out.

## VI.

And when their eyes flashed . . . O  
 my beautiful eyes! . . .  
*I* exulted; nay, let them go forth at  
 the wheels  
 Of the guns, and denied not. But  
 then the surprise  
 When one sits quite alone! Then  
 one weeps, then one kneels  
 God, how the house feels!

## VII.

At first, happy news came, in gay  
 letters moiled  
 With my kisses, of camp-life and  
 glory, and how  
 They both loved me; and, soon com-  
 ing home to be spoiled,  
 In return would fan off every fly  
 from my brow  
 With their green laurel-bough.

## VIII.

Then was triumph at Turin: "An-  
 cona was free!"  
 And some one came out of the  
 cheers in the street,  
 With a face pale as stone, to say  
 something to me.  
 My Guido was dead! I fell down  
 at his feet,  
 While they cheered in the street.

## IX.

I bore it; friends soothed me; my  
 grief looked sublime  
 As the ransom of Italy. One boy  
 remained  
 To be leant on and walked with, re-  
 calling the time  
 When the first grew immortal,  
 while both of us strained  
 To the height he had gained.

## X.

And letters still came, shorter, sadder,  
 more strong,  
 Writ now but in one hand. "I  
 was not to faint,—  
 One loved me for two, would be with  
 me ere long:  
 And *Viva l'Italia!*— he died for,  
 our saint,  
 Who forbids our complaint."

## XI.

My Nanni would add, "he was safe,  
 and aware  
 Of a presence that turned off the  
 balls,— was imprest  
 It was Guido himself, who knew  
 what I could bear,  
 And how 'twas impossible, quite  
 dispossess,  
 To live on for the rest."

## XII.

On which, without pause, up the tele-  
 graph-line  
 Swept smoothly the next news  
 from Gaeta,— *Shot*.  
*Tell his mother*. Ah, ah! "his,"  
 "their" mother, not "mine:"  
 No voice says, "*My* mother," again  
 to me. What!  
 You think Guido forgot?

## XIII.

Are souls straight | so happy, that,  
 dizzy with heaven,  
 They drop earth's affections, conceive not of woe?  
 I think not. Themselves were too lately forgiven  
 Through THAT Love and Sorrow which reconciled so  
 The Above and Below

## XIV.

O Christ of the five wounds, who look'dst through the dark  
 To the face of thy mother! consider, I pray,  
 How we common mothers stand desolate, mark,  
 Whose sons, not being Christs, die with eyes turned away,  
 And no last word to say.

## XV.

Both boys dead? but that's out of nature. We all  
 Have been patriots, yet each house must always keep one.  
 'Twere imbecile, hewing out roads to a wall;  
 And, when Italy's made, for what end is it done,  
 If we have not a son?

## XVI.

Ah, ah, ah! when Gaeta's taken, what then?  
 When the fair wicked queen sits no more at her sport  
 Of the fire-balls of death crashing souls out of men?  
 When the guns of Cavalli with final retort  
 Have cut the game short?

## XVII.

When Venice and Rome keep their new jubilee;  
 When your flag takes all heaven for its white, green, and red;  
 When *you* have your country from mountain to sea;  
 When King Victor has Italy's crown on his head,  
 (And *I* have my dead), —

## XVIII.

What then? Do not mock me. Ah, ring your bells low,  
 And burn your lights faintly! *My* country is *there*,  
 Above the star pricked by the last peak of snow:  
 My Italy's *THERE*, with my brave civic pair  
 To disfranchise despair!

## XIX.

Forgive me. Some women bear children in strength,  
 And bite back the cry of their pain in self-scorn;  
 But the birth-pangs of nations will wring us at length  
 Into wail such as this; and we sit on forlorn  
 When the man-child is born.

## XX.

Dead! One of them shot by the sea in the east,  
 And one of them shot in the west by the sea.  
 Both! both my boys! If in keeping the feast  
 You want a great song for your Italy free,  
 Let none look at *me*!

[This was Laura Savio of Turin, a poetess and patriot, whose sons were killed at Ancona and Gaeta.]

## NATURE'S REMORSES.

ROME, 1861.

## I.

HER soul was bred by a throne, and fed  
 From the sucking-bottle used in her race  
 On starch and water (for mother's milk,  
 Which gives a larger growth instead),  
 And, out of the natural liberal grace,  
 Was swaddled away in violet silk.

## II.

And young and kind, and royally  
blind,  
Forth she stepped from her palace-  
door  
On three-piled carpet of compli-  
ments,  
Curtains of incense drawn by the  
wind  
In between her forevermore  
And daylight issues of events.

## III.

On she drew, as a queen might do,  
To meet a dream of Italy, —  
Of magical town and musical  
wave,  
Where even a god, his amulet blue  
Of shining sea, in an ecstasy,  
Dropt and forgot in a nereid's  
cave.

## IV.

Down she goes, as the soft wind  
blows,  
To live more smoothly than mortals  
can,  
To love and to reign as queen and  
wife,  
To wear a crown that smells of a rose,  
And still, with a sceptre as light as  
a fan,  
Beat sweet time to the song of  
life.

## V.

What is this? As quick as a kiss  
Falls the smile from her girlish  
mouth!  
The lion-people has left its lair,  
Roaring along her garden of bliss,  
And the fiery underworld of the  
South  
Scorched a way to the upper air.

## VI.

And a fire-stone ran in the form of a  
man,  
Burning, boundingly, fatal and  
fell,  
Bowling the kingdom down!  
Where was the king?  
She had heard somewhat, since life  
began,  
Of terrors on earth, and horrors in  
hell,  
But never, never, of such a thing.

## VII.

You think she dropped when her  
dream was stopped,  
When the blotch of Bourbon blood  
inlay,  
Lividly rank, her new lord's  
cheek?  
Not so. Her high heart overtopped  
The royal part she had come to  
play.  
Only the men in that hour were  
weak.

## VIII.

And twice a wife by her ravaged life,  
And twice a queen by her kingdom  
lost,  
She braved the shock and the  
counter-shock  
Of hero and traitor, bullet and knife,  
While Italy pushed, like a vengeful  
ghost,  
That son of the Cursed from Gae-  
ta's rock.

## IX.

What will ye give her, who could not  
deliver,  
German princesses? A laurel-  
wreath  
All over-scored with your signa-  
tures?  
Graces, Serenities, Highnesses ever?  
Mock her not fresh from the truth  
of death,  
Conscious of dignities higher than  
yours.

## X.

What will ye put in your casket shut,  
Ladies of Paris, in sympathy's  
name?  
Guizot's daughter, what have you  
brought her?  
Withered immortelles, long ago cut  
For guilty dynasties perished in  
shame,  
Putrid to memory, Guizot's daugh-  
ter?

## XI.

Ah, poor queen! so young and serene!  
What shall we do for her, now  
hope's done,  
Standing at Rome in these ruins  
old,  
She too a ruin, and no more a queen?  
Leave her that diadem made by the  
sun  
Turning her hair to an innocent  
gold.

## XII.

Ay! bring close to her, as 'twere a  
rose to her,  
Yon free child from an Apennine  
city  
Singing for Italy, — dumb in the  
place!  
Something like solace, let us suppose,  
to her  
Given, in that homage of wonder  
and pity,  
By his pure eyes to her beautiful  
face.

## XIII.

Nature, excluded, savagely brooded;  
Ruined all queendom and dogmas  
of state:  
Then, in re-action remorseful and  
mild,  
Rescues the womanhood, nearly  
eluded,  
Shows her what's sweetest in wo-  
manly fate —  
Sunshine from heaven, and the  
eyes of a child.

THE NORTH AND THE  
SOUTH.

[THE LAST POEM.]

ROME, MAY, 1861.

## I.

"Now give us lands where the olives  
grow,"  
Cried the North to the South,  
"Where the sun, with a golden  
mouth, can blow  
Blue bubbles of grapes down a vine-  
yard-row!"  
Cried the North to the South.

"Now give us men from the sunless  
plain,"  
Cried the South to the North,

"By need of work in the snow and  
the rain,  
Made strong, and brave by familiar  
pain!"  
Cried the South to the North.

## II.

"Give lucider hills and intenser  
seas,"  
Said the North to the South,  
"Since ever, by symbols and bright  
degrees,  
Art, childlike, climbs to the dear  
Lord's knees,"  
Said the North to the South.

"Give strenuous souls for belief and  
prayer,"  
Said the South to the North,  
"That stand in the dark on the low-  
est stair,  
While affirming of God, 'He is cer-  
tainly there,'"  
Said the South to the North.

## III.

"Yet, oh for the skies that are softer  
and higher!"  
Sighed the North to the South;  
"For the flowers that blaze, and the  
trees that aspire,  
And the insects made of a song or a  
fire!"  
Sighed the North to the South.

"And oh for a seer to discern the  
same!"  
Sighed the South to the North;  
"For a poet's tongue of baptismal  
flame,  
To call the tree or the flower by its  
name!"  
Sighed the South to the North.

## IV.

The North sent therefore a man of  
men  
As a grace to the South;  
And thus to Rome came Andersen.  
—"Alas, but must you take him  
again?"  
Said the South to the North.



## TRANSLATIONS.

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### FROM THEOCRITUS.

#### THE CYCLOPS.

(Idyl XI.)

AND so an easier life our Cyclops  
 drew,  
 The ancient Polyphemus, who in  
 youth  
 Loved Galatea while the manhood  
 grew  
 Adown his cheeks, and darkened  
 round his mouth.  
 No jot he cared for apples, olives,  
 roses;  
 Love made him mad; the whole  
 world was neglected,  
 The very sheep went backward to  
 their closes  
 From out the fair green pastures,  
 self-directed.  
 And singing Galatea, thus, he wore  
 The sunrise down along the weedy  
 shore,  
 And pined alone, and felt the cruel  
 wound  
 Beneath his heart, which Cypris' ar-  
 row bore,  
 With a deep pang: but, so, the cure  
 was found;  
 And, sitting on a lofty rock, he cast  
 His eyes upon the sea, and sang at  
 last:  
 "O whitest Galatea, can it be  
 That thou shouldst spurn me off who  
 love thee so?  
 More white than curds, my girl, thou  
 art to see,  
 More meek than lambs, more full of  
 leaping glee  
 Than kids, and brighter than the  
 early glow  
 On grapes that swell to ripen, — sour  
 like thee!  
 Thou comest to me with the fragrant  
 sleep,  
 And with the fragrant sleep thou  
 goest from me;

Thou fliest . . . fliest as a frightened  
 sheep  
 Flies the gray wolf! — yet love did  
 overcome me,  
 So long! — I loved thee, maiden, first  
 of all,  
 When down the hills (my mother  
 fast beside thee)  
 I saw thee stray to pluck the summer-  
 fall  
 Of hyacinth-bells, and went myself  
 to guide thee;  
 And since my eyes have seen thee,  
 they can leave thee  
 No more, from that day's light!  
 But thou . . . by Zeus,  
 Thou wilt not care for *that*, to let it  
 grieve thee!  
 I know thee, fair one, why thou  
 springest loose  
 From my arm round thee. Why? I  
 tell thee, dear!  
 One shaggy eyebrow draws its  
 smudging road  
 Straight through my ample front,  
 from ear to ear;  
 One eye rolls underneath; and  
 yawning, broad,  
 Flat nostrils feel the bulging lips too  
 near.  
 Yet . . . ho, ho! — *I*, — whatever I  
 appear, —  
 Do feed a thousand oxen! When  
 I have done,  
 I milk the cows, and drink the milk  
 that's best!  
 I lack no cheese, while summer  
 keeps the sun;  
 And after, in the cold, it's ready prest!  
 And then, I know to sing, as there  
 is none  
 Of all the Cyclops can, . . . a song of  
 thee,  
 Sweet apple of my soul, on love's fair  
 tree,  
 And of myself who love thee . . . till  
 the west  
 Forgets the light, and all but I have  
 rest.

I feed for thee, besides, eleven fair  
 does,  
 And all in fawn; and four tame  
 whelps of bears.  
 Come to me, sweet! thou shalt have  
 all of those  
 In change for love! I will not  
 halve the shares.  
 Leave the blue sea, with pure white  
 arms extended  
 To the dry shore; and, in my cave's  
 recess,  
 Thou shalt be gladder for the noon-  
 light ended;  
 For here be laurels, spiral cypresses,  
 Dark ivy, and a vine whose leaves  
 infold  
 Most luscious grapes; and here is  
 water cold,  
 The wooded Ætna pours down  
 through the trees  
 From the white snows, which gods  
 were scarce too bold  
 To drink in turn with nectar. Who  
 with these  
 Would choose the salt wave of the  
 lukewarm seas?  
 Nay, look on me! If I am hairy and  
 rough,  
 I have an oak's heart in me; there's  
 a fire  
 In these gray ashes which burns hot  
 enough;  
 And, when I burn for *thee*, I grudge  
 the pyre  
 No fuel . . . not my soul, nor this one  
 eye, —  
 Most precious thing I have, because  
 thereby  
 I see thee, fairest! Out, alas! I  
 wish  
 My mother had borne me finned like  
 a fish,  
 That I might plunge down in the  
 ocean near thee,  
 And kiss thy glittering hand be-  
 tween the weeds,  
 If still thy face were turned; and I  
 would bear thee  
 Each lily white, and poppy fair that  
 bleeds  
 Its red heart down its leaves! — one  
 gift, for hours  
 Of summer, — one for winter; since  
 to cheer thee,  
 I could not bring at once all kinds of  
 flowers.  
 Even now, girl, now, I fain would  
 learn to swim,

If stranger in a ship sailed nigh, I  
 wis,  
 That I may know how sweet a thing  
 it is  
 To live down with you in the deep  
 and dim!  
 Come up, O Galatea, from the  
 ocean,  
 And, having come, forget again to  
 go!  
 As I, who sing out here my heart's  
 emotion,  
 Could sit forever. Come up from  
 below!  
 Come, keep my flocks beside me,  
 milk my kine;  
 Come, press my cheese, distract my  
 whey and curd!  
 Ah, mother! she alone . . . that  
 mother of mine . . .  
 Did wrong me sore! I blame her!  
 Not a word  
 Of kindly intercession did she ad-  
 dress  
 Thine ear with for my sake; and ne'er-  
 theless  
 She saw me wasting, wasting, day  
 by day:  
 Both head and feet were aching, I  
 will say,  
 All sick for grief, as I myself was  
 sick.  
 O Cyclops, Cyclops! whither hast  
 thou sent  
 Thy soul on fluttering wings? If  
 thou wert bent  
 On turning bowls, or pulling green  
 and thick  
 The sprouts to give thy lambkins,  
 thou wouldst make thee  
 A wiser Cyclops than for what we  
 take thee.  
 Milk dry the present! Why pursue  
 too quick  
 That future which is fugitive aright?  
 Thy Galatea thou shalt haply find,  
 Or else a maiden fairer and more  
 kind;  
 For many girls do call me through  
 the night,  
 And, as they call, do laugh out sil-  
 verly.  
 I, too, am something in the world,  
 I see!"

While thus the Cyclops love and  
 lambs did fold,  
 Ease came with song, he could not  
 buy with gold.

## FROM APULEIUS.

## PSYCHE GAZING ON CUPID.

(METAMORPH., Lib. IV.)

THEN Psyche, weak in body and soul,  
 put on  
 The cruelty of fate, in place of  
 strength:  
 She raised the lamp to see what  
 should be done,  
 And seized the steel, and was a man  
 at length  
 In courage, though a woman! Yes,  
 but when  
 The light fell on the bed whereby  
 she stood  
 To view the "beast" that lay there,  
 certes, then,  
 She saw the gentlest, sweetest beast  
 in wood,—  
 Even Cupid's self, the beauteous god!  
 more beauteous  
 For that sweet sleep across his eye-  
 lids dim.  
 The light the lady carried as she  
 viewed  
 Did blush for pleasure as it lighted  
 him,  
 The dagger trembled from its aim un-  
 duteous:  
 And *she* . . . oh, *she* — amazed and  
 soul-distraught,  
 And fainting in her whiteness like a  
 veil,  
 Slid down upon her knees, and,  
 shuddering, thought  
 To hide—though in her heart—the  
 dagger pale!  
 She would have done it; but her hands  
 did fail  
 To hold the guilty steel, they shiv-  
 ered so;  
 And feeble, exhausted, unawares she  
 took  
 To gazing on the god, till, look by  
 look,  
 Her eyes with larger life did fill and  
 glow.  
 She saw his golden head alight with  
 curls:  
 She might have guessed their bright-  
 ness in the dark  
 By that ambrosial smell of heavenly  
 mark!  
 She saw the milky brow, more pure  
 than pearls,

The purple of the cheeks, divinely  
 sundered  
 By the globed ringlets, as they glided  
 free,  
 Some back, some forwards,—all so  
 radiantly,  
 That, as she watched them there,  
 she never wondered  
 To see the lamplight, where it  
 touched them, tremble:  
 On the god's shoulders, too, she  
 marked his wings  
 Shine faintly at the edges, and re-  
 semble  
 A flower that's near to 'blow. The  
 poet sings  
 And lover sighs, that love is fugi-  
 tive;  
 And certes, though these pinions lay  
 reposing,  
 The feathers on them seemed to stir  
 and live  
 As if by instinct, closing and unclos-  
 ing.  
 Meantime the god's fair body slum-  
 bered deep,  
 All worthy of Venus, in his shining  
 sleep;  
 While at the bed's foot lay the  
 quiver, bow,  
 And darts,—his arms of godhead.  
 Psyche gazed,  
 With eyes that drank the wonders  
 in, said, "Lo,  
 Be these my husband's arms?" and  
 straightway raised  
 An arrow from the quiver-case, and  
 tried  
 Its point against her finger: trem-  
 bling till  
 She pushed it in too deeply (foolish  
 bride!)  
 And made her blood some dewdrops  
 small distil,  
 And learnt to love Love, of her own  
 good will.

PSYCHE WAFTED BY ZEPHY-  
RUS.

(METAMORPH., Lib. IV.)

WHILE Psyche wept upon the rock,  
 forsaken,  
 Alone, despairing, dreading, gradu-  
 ally

By Zephyrus she was inwra<sup>p</sup>t and  
 taken,  
 Still trembling, — like the lilies  
 planted high, —  
 Through all her fair white limbs.  
 Her vesture spread,  
 Her very bosom eddying with sur-  
 prise,  
 He drew her slowly from the moun-  
 tain-head,  
 And bore her down the valleys with  
 wet eyes,  
 And laid her in the lap of a green dell  
 As soft with grass and flowers as  
 any nest,  
 With trees beside her, and a limpid  
 well:  
 Yet Love was not far off from all that  
 rest.

---

PSYCHE AND PAN.

(METAMORPH., Lib. V.)

THE gentle River, in her Cupid's  
 honor,  
 Because he used to warm the very  
 wave,  
 Did ripple aside, instead of closing on  
 her,  
 And cast up Psyche, with a reflue<sup>n</sup>ce  
 brave,  
 Upon the flowery bank, all sad and  
 sinning.  
 Then Pan, the rural god, by chance  
 was leaning  
 Along the brow of waters as they  
 wound,  
 Kissing the reed-nymph till she sank  
 to ground  
 And teaching, without knowledge of  
 the meaning,  
 To run her voice in music after his  
 Down many a shifting note (the goats  
 around,  
 In wandering pasture and most  
 leaping bliss,  
 Drawn on to crop the river's flowery  
 hair).  
 And as the hoary god beheld her  
 there,  
 The poor, worn, fainting Psyche!  
 knowing all  
 The grief she suffered, he did gently  
 call  
 Her name, and softly comfort her de-  
 spair: —

“O wise, fair lady! I am rough and  
 rude,  
 And yet experienced through my  
 weary age;  
 And if I read aright, as soothsayer  
 should,  
 Thy faltering steps of heavy pilgrim-  
 age,  
 Thy paleness, deep as snow we can-  
 not see  
 The roses through, — thy sighs of  
 quick returning,  
 Thine eyes that seem themselves two  
 souls in mourning, —  
 Thou lovest, girl, too well, and bit-  
 terly!  
 But hear me: rush no more to a head-  
 long fall:  
 Seek no more deaths! leave wail,  
 lay sorrow down,  
 And pray the sovran god; and use  
 withal  
 Such prayer as best may suit a ten-  
 der youth,  
 Well pleased to bend to flatteries from  
 thy mouth,  
 And feel them stir the myrtle of his  
 crown.”

— So spake the shepherd-god; and  
 answer none  
 Gave Psyche in return; but silently  
 She did him homage with a bended  
 knee,  
 And took the onward path.

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PSYCHE PROPITIATING CERES.

(METAMORPH., Lib. VI.)

THEX mother Ceres from afar beheld  
 her,  
 While Psyche, touched, with rever-  
 ent fingers meek,  
 The temple's scythes; and with a cry  
 compelled her: —  
 “O wretched Psyche, Venus roams  
 to seek  
 Thy wandering footsteps round the  
 weary earth,  
 Anxious and maddened, and adjures  
 thee forth  
 To accept the imputed pang, and  
 let her wreak  
 Full vengeance with full force of  
 deity!

Yet *thou*, forsooth, art in my temple here,  
 Touching my scythes, assuming my degree,  
 And daring to have thoughts that are not fear!"  
 — But Psyche clung to her feet, and as they moved  
 Rained tears along their track, tear dropped on tear,  
 And drew the dust on in her trailing locks,  
 And still, with passionate prayer, the charge disproved:—  
 "Now, by thy right hand's gathering from the shocks  
 Of golden corn, and by thy gladsome rites  
 Of harvest, and thy consecrated sights  
 Shut safe and mute in chests, and by the course  
 Of thy slave dragons, and the driving force  
 Of ploughs along Sicilian glebes profound,  
 By thy swift chariot, by thy steadfast ground,  
 By all those nuptial torches that departed  
 With thy lost daughter, and by those that shone  
 Back with her when she came again glad-hearted,  
 And by all other mysteries which are done  
 In silence at Eleusis, I beseech thee,  
 O Ceres! take some pity, and abstain  
 From giving to my soul extremest pain  
 Who am the wretched Psyche. Let me teach thee  
 A little mercy, and have thy leave to spend  
 A few days only in thy garnered corn,  
 Until that wrathful goddess, at the end,  
 Shall feel her hate grow mild, the longer borne;  
 Or till, alas! this faintness at my breast  
 Pass from me, and my spirit apprehend  
 From lifelong woe a breath-time hour of rest!"  
 — But Ceres answered, "I am moved indeed  
 By prayers so moist with tears, and would defend

The poor beseecher from more utter need;  
 But where old oaths, anterior ties, commend,  
 I cannot fail to a sister, lie to a friend,  
 As Venus is to *me*. Depart with speed!"

## PSYCHE AND THE EAGLE.

(METAMORPH., Lib. VI.)

BUT sovran Jove's rapacious bird, the regal  
 High percher on the lightning, the great eagle,  
 Drove down with rushing wings; and thinking how,  
 By Cupid's help, he bore from Ida's brow  
 A cup-boy for his master, he inclined  
 To yield, in just return, an influence kind;  
 The god being honored in his lady's woe.  
 And thus the Bird wheeled downward from the track  
 Gods follow gods in, to the level low  
 Of that poor face of Psyche left in wrack.  
 — "Now fie, thou simple girl!" the bird began;  
 "For, if thou think to steal and carry back  
 A drop of holiest stream that ever ran,  
 No simpler thought, methinks, were found in man.  
 What! know'st thou not these Stygian waters be  
 Most holy, even to Jove? that as, on earth,  
 Men swear by gods and by the thunder's worth,  
 Even so the heavenly gods do utter forth  
 Their oaths by Styx's flowing majesty?  
 And yet one little urnful I agree  
 To grant thy need!" Whereat, all hastily,  
 He takes it, fills it from the willing wave,  
 And bears it in his beak, incarnadined

By the last Titan-prey he screamed  
to have;  
And, striking calmly out against the  
wind  
Vast wings on each side, there, where  
Psyche stands,  
He drops the urn down in her lifted  
hands.

#### PSYCHE AND CERBERUS.

(METAMORPH., Lib. VI.)

A MIGHTY dog with three colossal  
necks,  
And heads in grand proportion;  
vast as fear,  
With jaws that bark the thunder out  
that breaks  
In most innocuous dread for ghosts  
anear,  
Who are safe in death from sorrow:  
he reclines  
Across the threshold of Queen Proserpine's  
Dark-sweeping halls, and there, for  
Pluto's spouse,  
Doth guard the entrance of the empty  
house.  
When Psyche threw the cake to him,  
once amain  
He howled up wildly from his hun-  
ger-pain,  
And was still after.

#### PSYCHE AND PROSERPINE.

(METAMORPH., Lib. VI.)

THEN Psyche entered in to Proserpine  
In the dark house, and straightway  
did decline  
With meek denial the luxurious seat,  
The liberal board for welcome stran-  
gers spread,  
But sate down lowly at the dark  
queen's feet,  
And told her tale, and brake her  
oaten bread,  
And when she had given the pyx in  
humble duty,

And told how Venus did entreat  
the queen  
To fill it up with only one day's beau-  
ty  
She used in Hades, star-bright and  
serene,  
To beautify the Cyprian, who had  
been  
All spoilt with grief in nursing her  
sick boy,  
Then Proserpine, in malice and in joy,  
Smiled in the shade, and took the  
pyx, and put  
A secret in it; and so, filled and  
shut,  
Gave it again to Psyche. Could she  
tell  
It held no beauty but a dream of  
hell?

#### PSYCHE AND VENUS.

(METAMORPH., Lib. VI.)

AND Psyche brought to Venus what  
was sent  
By Pluto's spouse; the paler, that  
she went  
So low to seek it down the dark de-  
scent.

#### MERCURY CARRIES PSYCHE TO OLYMPUS.

(METAMORPH., Lib. VI.)

THEN Jove commanded the god Mer-  
cury  
To float up Psyche from the earth.  
And she  
Sprang at the first word, as the foun-  
tain springs,  
And shot up bright and rustling  
through his wings.

#### MARRIAGE OF PSYCHE AND CUPID.

(METAMORPH., Lib. VI.)

AND Jove's right hand approached  
the ambrosial bowl  
To Psyche's lips, that scarce dared  
yet to smile:

" Drink, O my daughter, and acquaint  
 thy soul  
 With deathless uses, and be glad  
 the while !  
 No more shall Cupid leave thy lovely  
 side:  
 Thy marriage-joy begins for never-  
 ending."  
 While yet he spake, the nuptial feast  
 supplied,  
 The bridegroom on the festive couch  
 was bending  
 O'er Psyche in his bosom, Jove the same  
 On Juno, and the other deities  
 Alike ranged round. The rural cup-  
 boy came  
 And poured Jove's nectar out with  
 shining eyes,  
 While Bacchus for the others did as  
 much,  
 And Vulcan spread the meal; and  
 all the Hours  
 Made all things purple with a sprin-  
 kle of flowers,  
 Or roses chiefly, not to say the touch  
 Of their sweet fingers; and the  
 Graces glided  
 Their balm around; and the Muses  
 through the air  
 Struck out clear voices, which were  
 still divined  
 By that divinest song Apollo there  
 Intoned to his lute; while Aphro-  
 ditè fair  
 Did float her beauty along the tune,  
 and play  
 The notes right with her feet. And  
 thus the day  
 Through every perfect mood of joy  
 was carried.  
 The Muses sang their chorus; Saty-  
 rus  
 Did blow his pipes; Pan touched  
 his reed: and thus  
 At last were Cupid and his Psyche mar-  
 ried.

FROM NONNUS.

HOW BACCHUS FINDS ARIAD-  
NE SLEEPING.

(DIONYSIACA, Lib. XLVII.)

WHEN Bacchus first beheld the deso-  
 late  
 And sleeping Ariadne, wonder  
 straight

Was mixed with love in his great  
 golden eyes;  
 He turned to his Bacchantes in sur-  
 prise,  
 And said with guarded voice, " Hush!  
 strike no more  
 Your brazen cymbals; keep those  
 voices still  
 Of voice and pipe; and, since ye  
 stand before  
 Queen Cypris, let her slumber as  
 she will !  
 And yet the cestus is not here in  
 proof.  
 A Grace, perhaps, whom sleep has  
 stolen aloof:  
 In which case, as the morning shines  
 in view,  
 Wake this Aglaia!—yet in Naxos,  
 who  
 Would veil a Grace so? Hush! And  
 if that she  
 Were Hebe, which of all the gods can  
 be  
 The pourer out of wine? or if we  
 think  
 She's like the shining moon by ocean's  
 brink,  
 The guide of herds, why, could she  
 sleep without  
 Endymion's breath on her cheek? or  
 if I doubt  
 Of silver-footed Thetis, used to tread  
 These shores, even *she* (in reverence  
 be it said)  
 Has no such rosy beauty to dress deep  
 With the blue waves. The Loxian  
 goddess might  
 Repose so from her hunting toil  
 aright  
 Beside the sea, since toil gives birth  
 to sleep;  
 But who would find her with her  
 tunic loose,  
 Thus? Stand off, Thracian! stand  
 off! Do not leap,  
 Not this way! Leave that piping,  
 since I choose,  
 O dearest Pan, and let Athenè rest !  
 And yet if she be Pallas . . . truly  
 guessed . . .  
 Her lance is—where? her helm and  
 ægis—where?"  
 — As Bacchus closed, the miserable  
 Fair  
 Awoke at last, sprang upward from  
 the sands,  
 And gazing wild on that wild  
 throned that stands

Around, around her, and no Theseus there!—  
 Her voice went moaning over shore and sea,  
 Beside the halcyon's cry; she called her love;  
 She named her hero, and raged mad-deningly  
 Against the brine of waters; and above,  
 Sought the ship's track, and cursed the hours she slept;  
 And still the chiefest execration swept  
 Against Queen Paphia, mother of the ocean;  
 And cursed and prayed by times in her emotion  
 The winds all round. . . .

Her grief did make her glorious; her despair  
 Adorned her with its weight. Poor wailing child!  
 She looked like Venus when the goddess smiled  
 At liberty of godship, debonair:  
 Poor Ariadne! and her eyelids fair  
 Hid looks beneath them lent her by persuasion  
 And every grace, with tears of love's own passion.  
 She wept long; then she spake:  
 "Sweet sleep did come  
 While sweetest Theseus went. Oh, glad and dumb,  
 I wish he had left me still! for in my sleep  
 I saw his Athens, and did gladly keep  
 My new bride-state within my Theseus' hall;  
 And heard the pomp of Hymen, and the call  
 Of 'Ariadne, Ariadne,' sung  
 In choral joy; and there with joy I hung  
 Spring-blossoms round love's altar!  
 ay, and wore  
 A wreath myself; and felt *him* evermore,  
 Oh, evermore beside me, with his mighty,  
 Grave head bowed down in prayer to Aphrodite!  
 Why, what a sweet, sweet dream!  
*He* went with it,  
 And left me here unwedded where I sit!

Persuasion help me! The dark night did make me  
 A brideship the fair morning takes away;  
 My love had left me when the hour did wake me;  
 And while I dreamed of marriage, as I say,  
 And blest it well, my blessed Theseus left me;  
 And thus the sleep I loved so has bereft me.  
 Speak to me, rocks, and tell thy grief to-day  
 Who stole my love of Athens." . . .

#### HOW BACCHUS COMFORTS ARIADNE.

(DIONYSIACA., Lib. XLVII.)

THEN Bacchus' subtle speech her sorrow crossed:  
 "O maiden, dost thou mourn for having lost  
 The false Athenian heart? and dost thou still  
 Take thought of Theseus, when thou mayst at will  
 Have Bacchus for a husband? Bacchus bright!  
 A god in place of mortal! Yes, and though  
 The mortal youth be charming in thy sight,  
 That man of Athens cannot strive below,  
 In beauty and valor, with my deity!  
 Thou'lt tell me of the labyrinthine dweller,  
 The fierce man-bull he slew: I pray thee, be,  
 Fair Ariadne, the true deed's true teller,  
 And mention thy clew's help! because, forsooth,  
 Thine armed Athenian hero had not found  
 A power to fight on that prodigious ground,  
 Unless a lady in her rosy youth  
 Had lingered near him; not to speak the truth  
 Too definitely out till names be known  
 Like Paphia's, Lovc's, and Ariadne's own.



Thou wilt not say that Athens can  
compare  
With Æther, nor that Minos rules  
like Zeus,  
Nor yet that Gnossus has such golden  
air  
As high Olympus. Ha! for noble  
use  
We came to Naxos! Love has well  
intended  
To change thy bridegroom! Happy  
thou, defended  
From entering in thy Theseus' earth-  
ly hall,  
That thou mayst hear the laughers  
rise and fall  
Instead, where Bacchus rules! Or  
wilt thou choose  
A still-surpassing glory?—take it  
all,—  
A heavenly house, Kronion's self for  
kin,—  
A place where Cassiopea sits within  
Inferior light, for all her daughter's  
sake,  
Since Perseus, even amid the stars,  
must take  
Andromeda in chains ethereal!  
But *I* will wreath *thee*, sweet, an as-  
tral crown,  
And as my queen and spouse thou  
shalt be known;  
Mine, the crown-lover's!" Thus, at  
length, he proved  
His comfort on her; and the maid was  
moved;  
And, casting Theseus' memory down  
the brine,  
She straight received the troth of her  
divine,  
Fair Bacchus; Love stood by to close  
the rite.  
The marriage-chorus struck up clear  
and light,  
Flowers sprouted fast about the  
chamber green,  
And with spring-garlands on their  
heads, I ween,  
The Orchomenian dancers came  
along,  
And danced their rounds in Naxos to  
the song.  
A Hamadryad sang a nuptial dit  
Right shrilly; and a Naiad sat be-  
side  
A fountain, with her bare foot shelv-  
ing it,  
And hymned of Ariadne, beauteous  
bride,

Whom thus the god of grapes had  
deified.  
Ortygia sang out, louder than her  
wont,  
An ode which Phœbus gave her to  
be tried,  
And leapt in chorus, with her stead-  
fast front,  
While prophet Love, the stars have  
called a brother,  
Burnt in his crown, and twined in one  
another  
His love-flower with the purple roses,  
given  
In type of that new crown assigned  
in heaven.

## FROM HESIOD.

## BACCHUS AND ARIADNE.

(THEOG. 947.)

THE golden-haired Bacchus did es-  
pouse  
That fairest Ariadne, Minos' daugh-  
ter,  
And made her wifhood blossom in  
the house,  
Where such protective gifts Kronion  
brought her,  
Nor Death nor Age could find her  
when they sought her.

## FROM EURIPIDES.

## AURORA AND TITHONUS.

(TROADES, ANTISTROPHE, 853.)

LOVE, Love, who once didst pass the  
Dardan portals,  
Because of heavenly passion!  
Who once didst lift up Troy in exulta-  
tion,  
To mingle in thy bond the high im-  
mortals!  
Love, turned from his own name  
To Zeus' shame,  
Can help no more at all.  
And Eos' self, the fair, white-steeded  
morning,—  
*Her* light which blesses other lands,  
returning,

Has changed to a gloomy pall !  
 She looked across the land with eyes  
 of amber;  
 She saw the city's fall;  
 She who, in pure embraces,  
 Had held there, in the hymeneal  
 chamber,  
 Her children's father, bright Tithonus  
 old,  
 Whom the four steeds with starry  
 brows and paces  
 Bore on, snatched upward, on the car  
 of gold,  
 And with him, all the land's full hope  
 of joy !  
 The love-charms of the gods are vain  
 for Troy.

NOTE.—Rendered after Mr. Burges's  
 reading, in some respects, not quite all.

#### FROM HOMER.

#### HECTOR AND ANDROMACHE.

(ILIAD, Lib. VI.)

SHE rushed to meet him: the nurse  
 following  
 Bore on her bosom the unsaddened  
 child,  
 A simple babe, prince Hector's well-  
 loved son,  
 Like a star shining when the world is  
 dark.  
 Scamandrius, Hector called him; but  
 the rest  
 Named him Astyanax, the city's  
 prince,  
 Because that Hector only, had saved  
 Troy.  
 He, when he saw his son, smiled si-  
 lently;  
 While, dropping tears. Andromache  
 pressed on,  
 And clung to his hand, and spake,  
 and named his name.

“Hector, my best one, thine own  
 nobleness  
 Must needs undo thee. Pity hast  
 thou none  
 For this young child and this most  
 sad myself,  
 Who soon shall be thy widow, since  
 that soon

The Greeks will slay thee in the gen-  
 eral rush;  
 And then, for me, what refuge, 'reft  
 of thee,  
 But to go graveward? Then, no com-  
 fort more  
 Shall touch me, as in the old sad  
 times thou know'st.  
 Grief only—grief! I have no father  
 now,  
 No mother mild. Achilles the di-  
 vine,  
 He slew my father, sacked his lofty  
 Thebes,  
 Cilicia's populous city, and slew its  
 king,  
 Eëtion—father!—did not spoil the  
 corse,  
 Because the Greek revered him in his  
 soul,  
 But burnt the body with its dædal  
 arms,  
 And poured the dust out gently.  
 Round that tomb  
 The Oreads, daughters of the goat-  
 nursed Zeus,  
 Tripped in a ring, and planted their  
 green elms.  
 There were seven brothers with me  
 in the house,  
 Who all went down to Hades in one  
 day,—  
 For he slew all, Achilles the divine,  
 Famed for his swift feet,—slain  
 among their herds  
 Of cloven-footed bulls and flocking  
 sheep!  
 My mother too, who queened it o'er  
 the woods  
 Of Hippoplacia, he, with other  
 spoil,  
 Seized,—and, for golden ransom,  
 freed too late,—  
 Since, as she went home, arrowy Ar-  
 temis  
 Met her and slew her at my father's  
 door.  
 But—O my Hector,—thou art still  
 to me  
 Father and mother!—yes, and brother  
 dear,  
 O thou, who art my sweetest spouse  
 beside!  
 Come now, and take me into pity!  
 Stay  
 I' the town here with us! Do not  
 make thy child  
 An orphan, nor a widow thy poor  
 wife!

Call up the people to the fig-tree,  
 where  
 The city is most accessible, the  
 wall  
 Most easy of assault! — for thrice  
 thereby  
 The boldest Greeks have mounted to  
 the breach, —  
 Both Ajaxes, the famed Idomenens,  
 Two sons of Atreus, and the noble  
 one  
 Of Tydeus, — whether taught by some  
 wise seer,  
 Or by their own souls prompted and  
 inspired.”

Great Hector answered: “Lady, for  
 these things  
 It is my part to care. And I fear  
 most  
 My Trojans, and their daughters, and  
 their wives,  
 Who through their long veils would  
 glance scorn at me  
 If, coward-like, I shunned the open  
 war.  
 Nor doth my own soul prompt me to  
 that end!  
 I learnt to be a brave man constantly,  
 And to fight foremost where my Tro-  
 jans fight,  
 And vindicate my father’s glory and  
 mine —  
 Because I know, by instinct and my  
 soul,  
 The day comes that our sacred Troy  
 must fall,  
 And Priam and his people. Knowing  
 which,  
 I have no such grief for all my Tro-  
 jans’ sake,  
 For Heeuba’s, for Priam’s, our old  
 king,  
 Not for my brothers’, who so many  
 and brave  
 Shall bite the dust before our ene-  
 mies, —  
 As, sweet, for thee! — to think some  
 mailed Greek  
 Shall lead thee weeping and deprive  
 thy life  
 Of the free sun-sight — that when  
 gone away  
 To Argos, thou shalt throw the dis-  
 taff there,  
 Not for thy uses — or shalt carry in-  
 stead  
 Upon thy loathing brow, as heavy as  
 doom,

The water of Greek wells — Messeis’  
 own,  
 Or Hyperea’s! — that some stander-  
 by,  
 Marking my tears fall, shall say, ‘ This  
 is she,  
 The wife of that same Hector who  
 fought best  
 Of all the Trojans, when all fought  
 for Troy,’ —  
 Ay! — and, so speaking, shall renew  
 thy pang  
 That, ’reft of him so named, thou  
 shouldst survive  
 To a slave’s life! But earth shall  
 hide my corse  
 Ere that shriek sound, wherewith  
 thou art dragged from Troy.”

Thus Hector spake, and stretched his  
 arms to his child.  
 Against the nurse’s breast, with child-  
 ly cry,  
 The boy clung back, and shunned his  
 father’s face,  
 And feared the glittering brass and  
 waving hair  
 Of the high helmet, nodding horror  
 down.  
 The father smiled, the mother could  
 not choose  
 But smile too. Then he lifted from  
 his brow  
 The helm, and set it on the ground to  
 shine:  
 Then kissed his dear child — raised  
 him with both arms,  
 And thus invoked Zeus and the gen-  
 eral gods: —

“ Zeus, and all godships! grant this  
 boy of mine  
 To be the Trojans’ help, as I my-  
 self, —  
 To live a brave life and rule well in  
 Troy!  
 Till men shall say, ‘ The son exceeds  
 the sire  
 By a far glory.’ Let him bring home  
 spoil  
 Heroic, and make glad his mother’s  
 heart.”

With which prayer, to his wife’s ex-  
 tended arms  
 He gave the child; and she received  
 him straight  
 To her bosom’s fragrance — smiling up  
 her tears.

Hector gazed on her till his soul was moved;  
 Then softly touched her with his hand and spake:  
 " My best one — 'ware of passion and excess  
 In any fear. There's no man in the world  
 Can send me to the grave apart from fate, —  
 And no man . . . sweet, I tell thee  
 . . . can fly fate, —  
 No good nor bad man. Doom is self-fulfilled.  
 But now, go home, and ply thy woman's task  
 Of wheel and distaff! bid thy maidens haste  
 Their occupation. War's a care for men —  
 For all men born in Troy, and chief for me."

Thus spake the noble Hector, and resumed  
 His crested helmet, while his spouse went home;  
 But as she went, still looked back lovingly,  
 Dropping the tears from her reverted face.

#### THE DAUGHTERS OF PANDARUS.

(*ODYSSEY*, Lib. XX.)

AND so these daughters fair of Pandarus,  
 The whirlwinds took. The gods had slain their kin:  
 They were left orphans in their father's house.  
 And Aphroditè came to comfort them  
 With incense, luscious honey, and fragrant wine;  
 And Herè gave them beauty of face and soul  
 Beyond all women; purest Artemis  
 Endowed them with her stature and white grace;  
 And Pallas taught their hands to flash along  
 Her famous looms. Then, bright with deity,  
 Toward far Olympus, Aphroditè went

To ask of Zeus (who has his thunder-joys  
 And his full knowledge of man's mingled fate)  
 How best to crown those other gifts with love  
 And worthy marriage: but, what time she went,  
 The ravishing Harpies snatched the maids away,  
 And gave them up, for all their loving eyes,  
 To serve the Furies who hate constantly.

#### ANOTHER VERSION.

So the storms bore the daughters of Pandarus out into thrall —  
 The gods slew their parents; the orphans were left in the hall.  
 And there, came, to feed their young lives, Aphroditè divine,  
 With the incense, the sweet-tasting honey, the sweet-smelling wine;  
 Herè brought them her wit above woman's, and beauty of face;  
 And pure Artemis gave them her stature, that form might have grace;  
 And Athenè instructed their hands in her works of renown;  
 Then, afar to Olympus, divine Aphroditè moved on:  
 To complete other gifts, by uniting each girl to a mate,  
 She sought Zeus, who has joy in the thunder and knowledge of fate,  
 Whether mortals have good chance or ill. But the Harpies alate  
 In the storm came, and swept off the maidens, and gave them to wait,  
 With that love in their eyes, on the Furies who constantly hate.

#### FROM ANACREON.

##### ODE TO THE SWALLOW.

THOU indeed, little swallow,  
 A sweet yearly comer,  
 Art building a hollow  
 New nest every summer,  
 And straight dost depart  
 Where no gazing can follow,

Past Memphis, down Nile!  
 Ah! but love all the while  
 Builds his nest in my heart,  
 Through the cold winter weeks:  
 And as one love takes flight,  
 Comes another, O swallow,  
 In an egg warm and white,  
 And another is callow.  
 And the large gaping beaks  
 Chirp all day and all night:  
 And the loves who are older  
 Help the young and the poor loves,  
 And the young loves grown bolder  
 Increase by the score loves —  
 Why, what can be done?  
 If a noise comes from one  
 Can I bear all this rout of a hundred  
 and more loves?

## FROM HEINE.

[THE LAST TRANSLATION.]

ROME, 1860.

## I.

## I.

OUT of my own great woe  
 I make my little songs,  
 Which rustle their feathers in throngs,  
 And beat on her heart even so.

## II.

They found the way, for their part,  
 Yet come again, and complain,  
 Complain, and are not fain  
 To say what they saw in her heart.

## II.

## I.

ART thou indeed so adverse?  
 Art thou so changed indeed?  
 Against the woman who wrongs me,  
 I cry to the world in my need.

## II.

O recreant lips unthankful,  
 How could ye speak evil, say,  
 Of the man who so well has kissed  
 you  
 On many a fortunate day?

## III.

## I.

MY child, we were two children,  
 Small, merry by childhood's law:  
 We used to crawl to the hen-house,  
 And hide ourselves in the straw.

## II.

We crowed like cocks; and whenever  
 The passers near us drew —  
 Cock-a-doodle! they thought  
 'Twas a real cock that crew.

## III.

The boxes about our courtyard  
 We carpeted to our mind,  
 And lived there both together, —  
 Kept house in a noble kind.

## IV.

The neighbor's old cat often  
 Came to pay us a visit:  
 We made her a bow and courtesy,  
 Each with a compliment in it.

## V.

After her health we asked,  
 Our care and regard to evince —  
 (We have made the very same  
 speeches  
 To many an old cat since).

## VI.

We also sate and wisely  
 Discoursed, as old folks do,  
 Complaining how all went better  
 In those good times we knew, —

## VII.

How love and truth and believing  
 Had left the world to itself,  
 And how so dear was the coffee,  
 And how so rare was the pelf.

## VIII.

The children's games are over,  
 The rest is over with youth, —  
 The world, the good games, the good  
 times,  
 The belief, and the love, and the  
 truth.

## IV.

## I.

Thou lovest me not, thou lovest me  
not!  
'Tis scarcely worth a sigh:  
Let me look in thy face, and no king  
in his place  
Is a gladder man than I.

## II.

Thou hatest me well, thou hatest me  
well —  
Thy little red mouth has told:  
Let it reach me a kiss, and, however  
it is,  
My child, I am well consoled.

## V.

## I.

My own sweet love, if thou in the  
grave,  
The darksome grave, wilt be,  
Then will I go down by the side, and  
grave  
Love-room for thee and me.

## II.

I kiss and caress and press thee wild,  
Thou still, thou cold, thou white!  
I wail, I tremble, and weeping mild,  
Turn to a corpse at the right.

## III.

The dead stand up, the midnight  
calls,  
They dance in airy swarms —  
We two keep still where the grave-  
shade falls,  
And I lie on in thine arms.

## IV.

The dead stand up, the Judgment-  
day  
Bids such to weal or woe —  
But nought shall trouble us where we  
stay  
Embraced and embracing below.

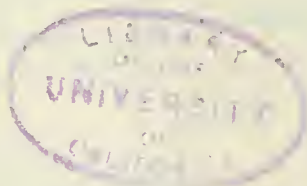
## VI.

## I.

THE years they come and go,  
The races drop in the grave,  
Yet never the love doth so,  
Which here in my heart I have.

## II.

Could I see thee but once, one day,  
And sink down so on my knee,  
And die in thy sight while I say,  
"Lady, I love but thee!"











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